

Emily Morse Symonds

MR. POPE

HIS LIFE AND TIMES

BY

GEORGE PASTON [pseud.]

Not Fortune's worshipper nor Fashion's fool,
Not Lucre's madman nor Ambition's tool,
Not proud nor servile, be one poet's praise,
That if he pleased, he pleased by manly ways:
That flattery, ev'n to kings, he held a shame,
And thought a lie in verse or prose the same;
That not in Fancy's maze he wandered long,
But stooped to Truth, and moralised his song.

Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.

WITH TWENTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS, INCLUDING
TWO PHOTOGRAVURE FRONTISPIECES

VOL I

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Works by the same Au or

A MODERN AMAZON
A BREAD AND BUTTER MISS
A STUDY IN PREJUDICES
THE CAREER OF CANDIDA
A FAIR DECEIVER
A WRITER OF BOOKS
MRS. DELANY
LITTLE MEMOIRS OF THE EIGHTEE TH CENTURY
LITTLE MEMOIRS OF THE NINETEE TH CENTURY
SIDELIGHTS ON THE GEORGIAN PERIOD
GEORGE ROMNEY
B. R. HAYDON AND HIS FRIEND
SOCIAL CARICATURE IN THE E H-TEENTH CENTURY
LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAG

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PREFACE

THERE is a certain type of reader (more common than the cultured may suppose) who, when the name of Pope is mentioned exclaims, "Pope! That's the man who said 'Whatever is, is right.'" A little more searching of the memory, and he recalls that Pope was also responsible for such platitudes as "The proper study of mankind is man," and "An honest man's the noblest work of God." He shows a tendency to confuse Pope with Solomon, and he has been known to attribute a line from the "Essay on Man" to Shakespeare. It is to this type of reader that the present plain chronicle of the life and work of the poet is more especially dedicated. Short summaries are given of all the important poems, in the hope that such a taste will inspire a desire for more. No attempt has been made at independent criticism, but passages are quoted from the judgments of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics.

It seems desirable to apologise in advance for the sins of omission and commission which must inevitably find their way into a study of such an expert mystery-monger as Pope. Also, for all offences against established beliefs, opinions, and prejudices, which, not less inevitably, must be com

mitted in dealing with a man who was so fruitful a source of quarrels in his life-time and of controversy after his death. If it be thought that the follies and failings of the poet are too frankly treated, let the dictum of Samuel Johnson be remembered: "We must confess the faults of our favourite in order to gain credit to our praise of his excellence. He that claims, either for himself or another, the honour of perfection, will surely injure the reputation of the friend he desires to assist."

For the benefit of those readers who may desire to improve their acquaintance with the poet, the following list is given of the authorities who have been consulted in the preparation of this work. First and foremost, of course, comes the definitive edition of "Pope's Works," published by Mr. Murray (1871-89), and edited by the Rev. Whitwell Elwin and Professor Courthope. This monumental work, with its scholarly memoir (by Professor Courthope), its admirable introductions and illuminative notes, is a veritable treasure-house of learning—indispensable to the student of eighteenth-century literature in general, and of the poetry of Pope in particular.

Though the editions of Roscoe, Bowles, Warton, and Warburton, have been superseded by this modern undertaking, still it is interesting to compare the conclusions of Pope's earlier with those of his later editors. The best handbook to the study of Pope is the memoir written by Sir Leslie Stephen for the "Men of Letters" series, but the longer and more detailed "Life" by Robert Carruthers

may also be read with interest. The researches ar
discoveries of Mr. Dilke are published among h
"Papers of a Critic," while an examination of Pope
edition of Shakespeare will be found in Mr
Lounsbury's valuable book, "The Two Fir
Editors of Shakespeare." Among the Essayists ar
critics who have paid special attention to Pope a
Isaaç Disraeli, Hazlitt, De Quincey, Thackera
Mark Pattison, and John Conington. Spence
"Anecdotes," Dr. Johnson's short "Life," an
Warburton's discursive "Essay on the Genius an
Writings of Pope," cannot be neglected, thoug
Ruffhead's "Life" may be taken as read. In
teresting allusions to the poet will be found i
the "Letters" of Dean Swift, Lord Bolingbrok
Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Mrs. Delany, Lad
Hervey, Lady Suffolk, Samuel Richardson, Aaro
Hill, the poet Gray, Horace Walpole, and Lor
Byron, as also in the works of Lord Chesterfiel
and the table-talk of Dr. Johnson. For th
curious in such matters, there is a whole librar
of lampoons on Pope in the British Museum
including attacks by Dennis, Welsted, Moore
Smythe, Ducket, and other members of the societ
of Grub Street. In the manuscript-room at th
Museum are a couple of volumes containing un
published letters addressed by Pope to Ralph Alle
and Hugh Bethel, from which passages have bee
quoted.

My warmest thanks are due to Captain Cottrel
Dormer, of Rousham (the beautiful Oxfordshir
house where Pope so often stayed), for his kindnes
in allowing me to read, and make extracts from

the interesting manuscript correspondence of Mrs. Cæsar, of Bennington.

I have also to thank Professor Courthope for the helpful letters that he was good enough to write in response to an appeal for "more light" on certain incidents in the poet's career.

May 23, 1909.

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MR. POPE

CHAPTER I

1688–1704

Parentage and Childhood

ALEXANDER POPE, poet and satirist, 'ho changed the tune of English verse, and at-tempted to change the tone of English morals, vas born, not inappropriately, in the year of Revolu on —on May 21, 1688. The subject of his b th and pedigree has been obscured by various lege ds, some invented by his enemies and others insp ed by himself. It seems, however, fairly well establis ed that there were three Alexander Popes, the 1 st being a clergyman of whom nothing is known exc pt that he held the living of Thruxton, in Hampsh e. His son, Alexander the Second, the father of ie poet, was born in 1645 and placed, while quit a youth, with a business firm at Lisbon, where, it is supposed, he became a convert to Romanism. Af er his return to England he started in business as a linen merchant[1] in Broad Street, and married a w fe of whom history merely relates that her name w s

[1] He "dealt in Hollands wholesale" (Spence).

Magdalen, and that she died in 1679, leaving one daughter.

Having prospered in a modest way, Mr. Pope moved to Lombard Street and married Edith Turner, the daughter of a small Yorkshire landowner. Here his famous son, Alexander the Third, was born. The marriage must have been a social rise for the linen merchant, and perhaps the cause for Miss Turner's condescension may be found in the fact that she was over forty at the time of the wedding, and belonged to a family of seventeen children. Three of her brothers served in the army, and a sister, Christina, married the successful miniature painter, Samuel Cooper.[1] Mrs. Cooper was godmother to the poet and left him a "painted china dish with a silver pot and a dish to set it in," as well as the reversion of her books, pictures, and medals.

Pope himself gives a more exalted account of his pedigree. His father, he asserted, belonged to a gentleman's family in Oxfordshire, the head of which was the Earl of Downe—a statement for which he seems to have been his own sole authority. His mother, he declared, had the education and breeding of a gentlewoman. Mrs. Pope's few letters leave her reader with a lively hope that the breeding

[1] Samuel Cooper (1609-1672). He was well named "The Little Van Dyck." He painted Charles II. and many members of his Court, but his *chef d'œuvre* was his portrait of Cromwell. In this connection Gillray's famous caricature may be remembered, "A Connoisseur examining a Cooper." This shows George III. looking at a miniature of Cromwell, and is a humorous reminder of the fate that another obstinate monarch suffered at the hands of the Protector.

of the contemporary gentlewoman was superioı to her education.

The truth is that the poet's parents were a pl n, honest, middle-class couple, gifted with plenty of common-sense, and still more uncommon t ct. Alexander the elder had the wit to make a sr all fortune and to retire from business before he as too old to adapt himself to a leisured country fe. In or about the year 1700 he bought a small hou e[1] and twenty acres of land at Binfield, a village on the borders of Windsor Forest.[2] Here he sett ed down very comfortably on his modest income of about four hundred a year, and from the first appe rs to have been received on equal terms by the cou ty families who lived in and around the For st. Though he had taken to country pursuits cc n-paratively late in life, he achieved some success as a gardener, and was especially distinguished for e excellence of his artichokes.[3] Mrs. Pope, w o, according to one not unbiassed opinion, "alw ys

[1] Pope describes it as—

> A little house, with trees a-row,
> And, like its master, very low.

[2] About two miles from Wokingham and nine from Windsor.

[3] His unobtrusive virtues are immortalised in his son's verses

> Stranger to civil and religious rage,
> The good man walked innoxious through his age.
> No courts he saw, no suits would ever try,
> Nor dared an oath, nor hazarded a lie.
> Unlearned, he knew no schoolman's subtle art,
> No language but the language of the heart.
> By nature honest, by experience wise,
> Healthy by temperance and by exercise.

The good man was also something of a critic, for he would g e back his son's verses to be "re-turned," saying, "These are t d rhymes."

appeared to have much better sense than her son,"[1] contrived throughout her long life to keep on good terms with her family, her neighbours, and her son's friends, these last including wits, Bohemians, free-thinkers, men about town, noble lords, and fashionable ladies. This was no small feat in days when self-control was not regarded as the first essential of good-breeding, and when tempers were constantly irritated and inflamed by over-indulgence in meat and drink.

Pope's physical heritage was inferior to his moral heritage. His parents were both middle-aged at the time of his birth. His father was afflicted with a slight spinal curvature, while his mother suffered from nervous head-aches, though both must have had strong constitutions, since they lived to advanced old age. It is difficult to imagine the poet as a child, but, according to his half-sister, Magdalen Rackett, he was a pretty, healthy little boy, with a round rosy face and a docile temper. His voice was so sweet that he earned the name of the "Little Nightingale." While still in petticoats he was attacked by a "wild cow," which struck at him with her horns, wounded him in the throat, and trampled on him. Though the accident does not seem to have been seriously regarded at the time, it is possible that it left some injury which helped to undermine his constitution.

As far as formal education went, the boy was not forced or over-driven. His aunt, Mrs. Cooper, is supposed to have taught him his letters, and he

[1] This was said by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu after her quarrel with Pope.

learnt to write by imitating print. As a Catholi the public schools and colleges were, of cours closed to him, and, after receiving a little instructio from a priest, he was sent to a Catholic school a Twyford, near Winchester, where, he declares, h unlearnt the little that he knew. From Twyfor he was removed because he had received a sever flogging for writing a satire on his master. H was sent for a short time to another school nea Hyde Park Corner, kept by Thomas Deane, pervert, who had stood in the pillory for hi principles. Deane was probably patronised by th Catholic gentry in recognition of his martyrdom since he was an incapable teacher. Pope used to say that he learnt nothing from him except to construe some of Tully's "Offices," but he appreciatec the leisure he enjoyed for his own pursuits and studies. Among his favourite books were Ogilby's version of the "Iliad," Sandys' Ovid and a translation of Statius.

"When I was about twelve," he relates, "I wrote a kind of play which I got to be acted by my schoolfellows. It was a number of speeches from the 'Iliad' tacked together with verses of my own." Thus it will be recognised that, what with his satires and his Homer, Pope the child was the legitimate father of Pope the man. The boy only remained for a short time at Deane's school and was then placed for a few months with a priest in the Forest. This was all the regular education he received, being permitted, soon after he entered his teens, to pursue his own studies at home.

"When I had done with my priest," he used

to say, "I took to reading for myself, for which I had a very great eagerness and enthusiasm, especially for poetry; and in a few years I had dipped into a great number of the English, French, Italian, Latin, and Greek poets. This I did without any design but that of pleasing myself, and got the languages by hunting after the stories in the several poets I read, rather than read the books to get the language. I followed everywhere as my fancy led me, and was like a boy gathering flowers in the field, just as they fell in my way."

At the age of thirteen Pope began an epic poem on the subject of Alcander, Prince of Rhodes, of which four thousand lines were written. In this work, which was two years in hand, he modestly endeavoured to collect all the beauties of the greatest poets, including Homer, Virgil, Statius, Ovid, Milton, Spenser, and Cowley! The manuscript was burnt in after-years, on the advice of Bishop Atterbury, who, however, regretted that the first page had not been preserved. Two or three verses which have survived show considerable dexterity in the handling of the heroic metre. The following couplet was transferred bodily to "The Dunciad":

> As man's meanders to the vital spring,
> Roll all their tides, then back their circles bring.[1]

More successful probably, because less ambitious,

[1] Another couplet showed the influence of the then fashionable poetaster, Sir Richard Blackmore:

> Shields, helms, and swords all jangle as they hang,
> And sound formidinous with angry clang.

was the "Ode to Solitude," which was written at the age of twelve, beginning:

> Happy the man who, free from care,
> The business and the noise of town,
> Contented breathes his native air
> In his own grounds,[1]

and concluding in a melancholy vein, appropriate to the age of the writer:

> Thus let me live, unseen, unknown,
> Thus, unlamented, let me die,
> Steal from the world, and not a stone
> Tell where I lie.

During his first great reading period, which lasted from his twelfth to his nineteenth year, Pope tells us that he made himself acquainted with all the best critics as well as all the best poets. Such continuous and impassioned study, though too desultory to make the poet a scholar in the strict sense of the word, made him at least a "full man." Reading that is undertaken for pleasure is naturally more easily assimilated than the compulsory studies of school and college, and Pope, who possessed only too perfect a memory, made the most of what the schoolmen would have regarded as very modest baggage.[2]

[1] This juvenile poem was not allowed to see the light without retouching. In the last version the false rhymes are corrected, and the first verse runs:

> Happy the man whose wish and care
> A few paternal acres bound,
> Content to breathe his native air
> In his own ground.

[2] Thomas Hearne, the antiquary, writing in 1729, said: "This Alexander Pope, though he be an English poet, yet he is but an

This absorption in literature created in the youthful student a corresponding interest in the literary men of his own time. When he was about twelve years old he contrived to catch a glimpse of Dryden, the master from whom, as he confesses, he had learnt the art of versification. Pope probably saw the old poet at Will's Coffee-house in Russell Street, Covent Garden, where Dryden had his own arm-chair, which in winter had a settled and prescriptive right to a place by the fire, and in summer was placed on the balcony. In any literary dispute the first appeal was made to him, and the young beaux and wits thought it a great honour to have a pinch of snuff out of his box. Although Pope, child as he was, looked on the poet with veneration, and observed him well, he could tell but little about him in after-life except that "Dryden was not a very genteel man; he was intimate with none but poetical men. He was said to be a very good man by all who knew him. He was as plump as Mr. Pitt, of a fresh colour and a down look, and not very conversible."

When he was about fifteen the young Alexander conceived a sudden desire to go to London for a time, in order to learn French and Italian. His family demurred to what seemed a wild sort of project, since, in spite of his strong wish to travel abroad, it was improbable that he would ever be strong enough to make the grand tour. However, he stuck to his point, and, as he generally managed

indifferent scholar, mean at Latin, and can hardly read Greek. He is a very ill-natured man, and covetous and excessively proud." But then Hearne had been ridiculed in "The Dunciad."

to get his own way with his parents, he obtained permission to spend a few months in London. During this brief period he is said to have "mastered" the desired languages. By "mastery," however, can only have been meant that he was able to spell out French and Italian, though Voltaire declares that "Pope, with whom I was intimately acquainted, could hardly read French and spoke not one syllable of our language." Pope certainly showed an intimate acquaintance with the works of the modern French poets and critics, and this could hardly have been obtained in every case through translations, though many of the standard French works were "done into English" at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries.

The young poet's mode of life, his unbridled passion for study, and his indifference to fresh air and exercise, had already developed in him the hereditary tendency to spinal trouble and nervous head-aches. In his mother and nurse he had, no doubt, two ministering angels, but they were angels without much knowledge of hygiene, while the medical treatment of the period rang the changes on bleeding, blistering, and purging. Probably there was excitement of mind as well as of body, for the boy's friends thought him "queer," and "Rag" Smith,[1] the dramatist, declared that he would become either a madman or a very great poet. By the time he reached the age of seventeen his health was so completely shattered that he resigned himself to death, and, not without enjoyment of his own

[1] Edmund Smith, a long-forgotten playwright.

pathetic fate, sent round farewell messages to all his friends. The family priest, however, Thomas Southcote,[1] refused to believe that the case was hopeless, and insisted on going to town to consult the famous Dr. Radcliffe. He returned with the valuable prescription, "Study less and ride out every day." This advice was followed, and in a short time the patient was able to take up again the burden of that "long disease," his life.

[1] Twenty years later the grateful poet was able to obtain for Southcote, through the good offices of Sir Robert Walpole, an abbacy near Avignon.

CHAPTER II

1704–1706

Early Friendships—Wycherley and the Wits

THE Catholic youth of Queen Anne's day was strictly limited in his choice of a profession. The army and navy were closed to him, as was the law, except in its lower branches. He could not hold office as a civil servant, and therefore the popular sport of place-hunting was not for him. He might practise as a medical man, though he could only look for a *clientèle* among members of his own religion, and he might become an author, an actor, a painter or a musician, but the pursuit of art or literature was not yet regarded as a "profession." At one time there was an idea that the young Pope should study medicine, but the boy's health was probably a bar to his entering any calling that required an arduous training. Painting—portrait-painting being understood—seemed a more suitable occupation for a sickly lad. Mrs. Pope had inherited from her sister Samuel Cooper's grinding-stone and muller, and the family councils were probably influenced by the successful example of the miniaturist. From time to time the young student would temporarily forsake his books and

devote himself with much industry, but little success, to the study of painting.

But it must have been clear to all, with eyes to see, that his true vocation was for "letters"[1]—an unprofitable calling, but, as the son of a man of independent means, he could "commence author" without the fear of starving in a garret, or being forced to prostitute his pen for bread. During a long probationary period his parents behaved with a kindness and consideration that may best be described as "modern." They nursed their poet when he was sick, believed in him when he was unproductive, and appear to have been equally content whether he pursued his studies quietly at home or played the man of pleasure among his friends in town.

At that time there was a little colony of old Catholic families living in or around the Forest, including the Dancastles of Binfield, the Englefields of Whiteknights, the Fermors of Tusmore, the Stonors of Stonor, and the Blounts of Mapledurham. That the retired London tradesman, his homely wife, and clever boy were soon admitted to the intimate friendship of the old-established families is somewhat remarkable, since the "county" usually resents the intrusion of trade into its midst and is not much attracted by talent. But in those persecuting days the members of the proscribed religion held closely together. It was not only the Catholic gentry,

[1] As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came.
I left no calling for this idle trade,
No duty broke, no father disobeyed.

Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.

however, who patronised the boy Pope. One of his earliest friends, was old Sir William Trumbull, ex-Ambassador and Secretary of State, who had retired from public life in 1697 and was now living at Easthampstead Park. When Pope, by Dr. Radcliffe's advice, began to ride daily in the Forest, he was joined by Sir William, who sympathised with the boy's poetical projects, and was always ready to discuss "the classics." [1]

In his youth Pope associated chiefly with elderly men, and in after-life he complained that this had brought him some troublesome habits. One of his earliest literary friends was Wycherley, the dramatist, of whose patronage he was so proud that he used to follow him about like a little dog. The acquaintance seems to have begun about 1704, when Pope was sixteen and Wycherley sixty-four. The dramatist was then a widower, and living on a small pension granted him by James II. The plays that had made him famous had all been written before he was thirty-five, but he had just published, by subscription, a folio volume of miscellaneous poems, the bottom dregs of his wit.

Wycherley introduced his boy-friend to William Walsh, of Abberley Park, poetaster and critic, man of fashion, and universal lover. Dryden had described him as the best living critic, and declared that with his "Dialogue concerning Women" [2] he had

[1] Sir William Trumbull was born in 1639 and died in 1716. He had been Envoy Extraordinary to France and Ambassador to the Porte. He was Secretary of State with the Duke of Shrewsbury from 1695 to 1697.

[2] Published in 1691. Walsh used to say that he had been guilty of every folly except matrimony. In his public capacity he

come into the world forty-thousand strong, before he had ever been heard of. It was Walsh who advised the young student to make "correctness" his study and aim, since, though we had several great poets, we had not one who was "correct." Nobody seems to have called upon the critic to define exactly what he meant by "correctness." But Pope was deeply impressed by the advice, which harmonised with his own inclinations, and, whether for good or evil, "correctness" became the fetish to which he sacrificed throughout his poetical life.

One other early friend of the poet's may be mentioned—Henry Cromwell, an elderly man about town, with literary tastes and a turn for writing verse. Gay alludes to him as "honest, hatless Cromwell in red breeches," and the only information that Johnson could collect about him was that he used to go out hunting in a tye-wig. From Pope's correspondence we gather that he was a regular habitué of green-rooms and coffee-houses, and that he tried to combine the rôles of lady-killer, critic, and sportsman. He was nearly fifty when Pope was introduced to him, and it is evident that the boy was impressed by his knowledge of the world, and tried, not too successfully, to model his own conversation and conduct upon those of the elderly beau.

Pope's earliest letters are addressed to Wycherley, Walsh, Sir William Trumbull, and the Rev. Ralph Bridge, a nephew of Sir William. The Wycherley correspondence was carefully "prepared" for publication by Pope, *more suo*, but the discovery of some

was a Whig M.P., and Gentleman of the Horse to Queen Anne. He was about forty-two when he made Pope's acquaintance.

of Wycherley's original letters at Longleat thı suspicion on the poet's methods of editing.[1] T first published letter from Pope to Wycherley, dat "Binfield, in Windsor Forest, December 26, 170 is interesting from its mention of Dryden.

"It was certainly a great satisfaction to me," says, "to see and converse with a man whom, in h writings, I had so long known with pleasure; but was a high addition to it to hear you at our ve first meeting doing justice to your dead frien Mr. Dryden. I was not so happy as to know him *Virgilium tantum vidi.* Had I been born earl enough, I must have known and loved him, for have been assured, not only by yourself but b Mr. Congreve and Sir William Trumbull, that hi personal qualities were as amiable as his poetical, not withstanding the many libellous misrepresentation of them, against which the former of these gentle men has told me he will one day vindicate him."

In Pope's opinion these injuries were begun by the violence of party, and continued by the scribblers who were envious of Dryden's fame. Already the young man had conceived a bitter prejudice against the critics, whom he likened, first to birds of prey, and afterwards to curs, though Wycherley had assured him that such a promising young poet had nothing to fear from criticism. Unluckily, Pope had set out on his epistolary career with the fatal

[1] Pope's edition was published in 1729, professedly from the original manuscripts in Lord Oxford's library. The incident will be dealt with in its proper place; but it should be mentioned here that Wycherley's letters have certainly been retouched by Pope, and that one at least of Pope's letters to Wycherley is made up out of letters to his friend, John Caryll.

determination to write "as a wit." Wycherley had never attempted to write as anything else, but the flow of his good things had presumably been used up for his comedies. The correspondence on both sides is chiefly remarkable for precious phrases, twisted periods, and far-fetched flattery. As De Quincey says, the correspondents strained every nerve "to outdo each other in carving all thoughts into a filigree work of rhetoric, and the amœbæan contest was like that between two village cocks from neighbouring farms, endeavouring to overcrow each other."

From Pope's version of his own letters, it would seem that he rebuked Wycherley, kindly but firmly, for dealing too liberally in flattery, remarking, "I must blame you for treating me with so much compliment, which is at best but the smoke of friendship." He was careful, however, to suppress a letter in which Wycherley brings the same charge against himself, protesting that his "great little friend" had tried his patience by high-flown praises, "for I have not seen so much poetry in prose a great while, since your letter is filled with so many fine words and acknowledgements of your obligations to me (the only asseverations of yours I dare contradict), for I must tell you your letter is like an author's epistle before the book, written more to show his wit to the world than his sincerity or gratitude to his friend, whom he libels with his praise, so that you have provoked my modesty even whilst you have soothed my vanity; for I know not whether I am more complimented or abused. . . ."

Wycherley professed a warm interest in Pope's

"intrigues" with the Muses. So old a man himself, he observes, can give no cause for jealou: to so young, so great, and so able a favourite of tl Nine. "I am, in my inquiry," he adds, "like o: Sir Bernard Gascoigne, who used to say that whe he was grown too old to have his visits admitte alone by the ladies, he always took along with hi a young man to ensure his welcome to them; fc had he come alone he had been rejected, onl because his visits were not scandalous to them."

Pope, who, since his childish efforts at origina poetry, had employed his pen chiefly in translatin and imitating classic models, completed his firs important work, the "Pastorals," in 1704, though a yet he seems to have had no thought of printin them. During the autumn of 1705 he spent som time in town, frequenting the theatres and coffee-houses, and improving his acquaintance with the wits. His poems, which were handed round in manuscript, were his best introduction, and brought him to the notice of the poetical Granville, afterwards Lord Lansdowne,[1] and the Duke of Buckingham.[2] Writing to an unknown correspondent about that time, Granville says:

"He [Wycherley] shall bring with him, if you will, a young poet, newly inspired, in the neighbour-

[1] George Granville (1667–1735) is celebrated by Pope in the "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" as "Granville the polite." Pope also addressed "Windsor Forest" to him. He wrote a play called *Heroick Love*, and verses, after the manner of Waller, in praise of "Mira." His poetry is justly forgotten, though his name, as a poet, is embalmed in his *protégé's* verse.

[2] John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, author of "An Essay on Poetry" and "An Essay on Satire."

hood of Cooper's Hill, whom he and Walsh have taken under their wing. His name is Pope. He is not above seventeen or eighteen years of age, and promises miracles. If he goes on as he has begun in the pastoral way, as Virgil first tried his strength, one may hope to see English poetry vie with the Roman, and this swan of Windsor sing as sweetly as the Mantuan."

Though he assiduously haunted Will's Coffee-house, then the great literary centre, Pope had to wait several years before he made the acquaintance of Addison and Steele, both of whom had already come to the front, Addison with his "Campaign" (1704) and Steele with his "Christian Hero" and his comedies. Of Swift, who visited London in 1705 and 1707, we hear nothing in Pope's early letters, while Gay had not yet emerged from behind his counter. Swift used to say that he never heard worse conversation than at Will's, and when Pope exchanged the famous coffee-house for Windsor Forest (October 1705) he declared that he found "no other difference than this betwixt the common town-wits and the down-right country fools—that the first are pertly in the wrong, with a little more flourish and gaiety—and the last neither in the right nor in the wrong, but confirmed in a stupid settled medium betwixt both. . . . Ours are a sort of modest, inoffensive people, who neither have sense nor pretend to any, but enjoy a jovial sort of dulness. They are commonly known in the world by the name of honest, civil gentlemen."

The respect and politeness with which this precocious youth was treated by at least one of his

country neighbours, who was by no means wanting in either sense or learning, are sufficiently illustrated by a brief extract from a letter from Sir William Trumbull, dated June 15, 1706:

"It is always to my advantage to correspond with you, for I either have the use of some of your books, or, which I value much more, your conversation. I am sure it will not be my fault if I do not improve by both. I wish also I could learn some skill in gardening from your father (to whom, with your good mother, all our services are presented, with thanks for the artichokes), who has sent us a pattern that I am afraid we shall copy but in miniature, for so our artichokes are in respect to his."

Wycherley, whose subscription volume of "Miscellanies" had been a failure, owing partly to the bankruptcy of his bookseller, was again occupied in correcting and transcribing such pieces as he thought might be reprinted in a smaller edition. His memory was so much impaired, however, that he was apt unconsciously to repeat his own thoughts and paraphrase those of others. It occurred to him that Pope's infatuation might be turned to some practical account, for early in 1705 he suggested that his young friend should look over and revise some of his essays and verses. Pope undertook the task with all the bright confidence of youth, though in so doing he ran counter to the advice of his shrewd old father. He began by correcting a paper on Dryden, of which Wycherley remarks: "I own you have made more of it by making it less, as the Dutch are said to burn half

the spices they bring home, to enhance the price of the remainder."

A request quickly followed to look over that "damned 'Miscellany' of mine, to pick out, if possible, some that may be altered, so that they may appear again in print." Ever ready to oblige, and superbly conscious of his own powers, Pope touched up the verses, composed new lines, deleted repetitions, and handed back the revised manuscripts with a compliment of which the intention is better than the metaphor: "You have commissioned me to paint your shop, and I have done my best to brush you up like your neighbours, but I can no more pretend to the merit of the production than a midwife to the virtues and good qualities of the child she helps into the light."

CHAPTER III

1706-1708

Life at Binfield

THE "Pastorals," of which mention has already been made, became famous long before they attained the honour of print. They were read and admired by wits of standing like Congreve and Garth, and by noblemen of discernment like Lord Halifax and Lord Wharton. "Knowing Walsh," as Pope dubbed him, declared that Virgil himself had written nothing so good at sixteen, and Trumbull complained that it was cruel to withhold such wonderful compositions from the world.[1] But the young poet professed to be in no hurry for publicity. The ideal of "correctness" was ever before his eyes, and he retouched, blotted, and polished until the fame of his work reached the ears of old Jacob Tonson, the publisher, who wrote to the unknown author on April 20, 1706:

"I have lately seen a pastoral of yours in Mr. Walsh's and Mr. Congreve's hands, which is extremely fine, and is generally approved by the best

[1] "Wits, courtiers, statesmen, grandees the most dignified and men of fashion the most brilliant, all alike treated him [Pope] not only with pointed kindness, but with a respect that seemed to acknowledge him as their intellectual superior" (De Quincey).

judges in poetry. I remember I have formerly seen you at my shop, and am sorry I did not improve my acquaintance with you. If you design your poem for the press, no person shall be more careful in printing of it, nor no one can give a greater encouragement to it."

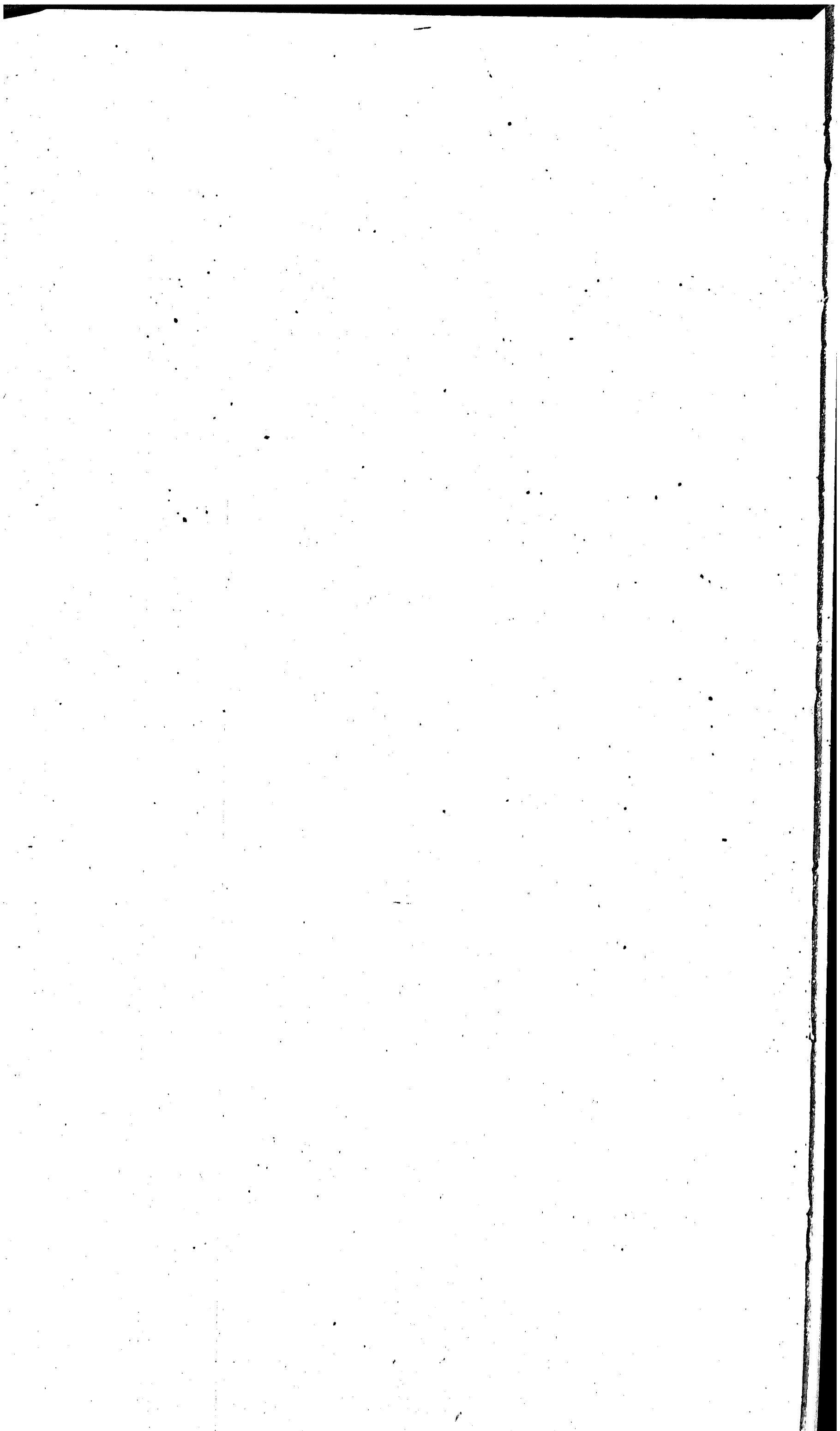
This flattering offer from Dryden's own publisher was naturally accepted, though Pope declared that he was heartily relieved when, from one cause or another, the publication of his firstling was postponed from year to year. But there was great jubilation among his patrons and admirers when Tonson's offer became known. "I am glad," wrote Wycherley, "to find you design your country beauty of a Muse shall appear at Court and in public to outshine all the farded, lewd, confident, and affected town-dowdies, who are being honoured only for their shame."

While awaiting his introduction to the public Pope occupied himself in making translations from Ovid and Statius, paraphrasing one or two of the "Canterbury Tales," and working at his drawing. The greater part of the year was spent at Binfield, but he was occasionally in town for a few weeks at a time, improving his acquaintance with the wits and rakes, and leading a life which had the worst effect upon what Wycherley called his "little, crazy, tender carcase." Though he lived at home free of charge and his parents allowed him to invite his new friends to Binfield, he found it difficult, with a rapidly increasing acquaintance and new standards of living, to obtain sufficient funds for current expenses from the parental exchequer. Thus



From a mezzotint engraving after the painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller.

JACOB TONSON.



early in July 1707 he writes a letter in dogge el verse to Henry Cromwell, beginning :

> I had to see you some intent
> But for a curst impediment,
> Which spoils full many a good design,
> That is to say, the want of coin.

He paid a visit to Walsh at Abberly Pa towards the end of the month, and probably cou not afford a stay in town as well. The abo letter is not worth quoting further, save for th following lines, which contain a biographical hir or two :

> To end with news, the best I know
> Is, I've been well a week or so.
> The season of green peas is fled,
> And artichokes reign in their stead.
> The Allies to bomb Toulon prepare;
> God save the pretty ladies there!
> One of our dogs is dead and gone,
> And I, unhappy! left alone.

One of the pleasantest traits in Pope's character was his love for animals, and there is a pretty little passage about a dog in one of his letters to Cromwell : "You are to know, then," he explains, "that as it is likeness that begets affection, so my favourite dog is a little one, a lean one, and none of the finest shaped. He is not much a spaniel in his fawning, but has, what might be worth many a man's while to imitate from him, a dumb, surly sort of kindness, that rather shows itself when he thinks me ill-used by others than when we walk quietly and peaceably by ourselves. If it be the chief point of friendship to comply with a friend's

motions and inclinations, he possesses this in an eminent degree; he lies down when I sit, and walks when I walk, which is more than many very good friends can pretend to—witness our walk a year ago in St. James's Park."

Cromwell solemnly denied the possibility of a "friendship" existing between a dog and his master, on the ground that the one could never be the equal in intelligence of the other. But Pope replied that there was no such obstacle in the way of friendly relations between his country neighbours and their dogs.

In his letters Pope took the greatest pains to adapt himself to his correspondents. Thus with Walsh he assumes the character of a man of letters, and with Cromwell that of a man of the world who merely amuses himself with poetry; while with Wycherley he was (till he grew tired of tinkering with the "damned 'Miscellany'") the grateful disciple and humble admirer. Throughout his correspondence Pope is nearly always at his worst when writing to, or about, women. His letters to Cromwell contain many allusions—gallant or otherwise—to the ladies of their acquaintance. Thus, on quitting London, after a long visit in the spring of 1708, he assures the old beau that he envies the town for nothing except that his friend remains there, but adds:

"Yet I guess you will expect I should recant this expression, when I tell you that Sappho (by which heathenish name you have christened a very orthodox lady) did not accompany me into the country. However, I will confess myself the less

concerned on that account, because I have no very violent inclination to lose my heart, especially in so wild and savage a place as this forest is. In the town it is ten to one but a young fellow may find his strayed heart again with some Wild Street or Drury Lane damsel, but here I could have met with no redress from an unmerciful virtuous dame. Well, sir, you have your lady in the town still, and I have my heart in the country still, which, being wholly unemployed as yet, has the more room in it for my friends, and does not want a corner at your service. . . ."

The "Sappho" here mentioned was a Mrs. Nelson, a lady of literary tastes who lived near Binfield; but another Sappho also appears in the correspondence—a Mrs. Thomas who was Cromwell's mistress at this time. Mrs. Sappho-Nelson soon followed her poet-friend into the country, for on April 26 he writes: "I made no question but the news of Sappho's staying behind me in town would surprise you; but she is since come into the country, and, to surprise you more, I will inform you that the first person she named when I waited on her was one Mr. Cromwell. What an ascendant you have over all the sex, who could gain the fair one's heart by appearing before her in a long, black unpowdered periwig; nay, without so much as the very extremities of clean linen in neckcloth and cuffs!"

Wycherley was invited to stay at Binfield this summer, but neither friendship nor fair weather could induce him to quit his comfortable quarters in town. Writing in November, Pope declares

that he is perfectly contented in his country home, and has never once thought of the town, nor inquired for any one in it, except Wycherley and Cromwell. The latter, he doubts not, is back at his old apartment in the Widow's Corner,[1] and has returned to his old diversions of "a losing game at piquet with the ladies, and half a play, or a quarter of a play, at the theatre, where you are none of the malicious audience, but the chief of amorous spectators, and for the infirmity of one sense,[2] which could only there serve to disgust you, enjoy the vigour of another which ravishes you. . . . So you have the advantage of being entertained with all the beauty of the boxes without being troubled with any of the dulness of the stage."

With Walsh, meanwhile, Pope was solemnly discussing the technique of prosody. He was anxious to know his Mentor's opinion on the question of borrowing or stealing from the ancients, and also sought advice as to the amount of "wit" that should be admitted into a pastoral. Walsh was leniency itself on the subject of borrowing, declaring that "the best poets in all languages are those that have the nearest copied the ancients." With regard to wit and fine writing generally, he was quite sound, observing that "in all writings whatsoever (not poetry only) nature is to be followed; and we should be jealous of ourselves for being fond of similes, conceits, and what they call saying fine things. When we were in the North, my Lord Wharton showed me a letter

[1] The widow Hambleton, who kept a coffee-house in Prince's Street, Drury Lane.

[2] Cromwell was deaf.

he had received from a certain great captain in Spain.[1] I told him I would by all means have that general recalled and set to writing here at home, for it was impossible that a man with so much wit as he showed could be fit to command an army, or do any other business."

[1] Lord Peterborough, who disproved Walsh's theories in the campaigns of Barcelona and Valencia.

CHAPTER IV

1709-10

The "Pastorals"

THE much-discussed "Pastorals," which the publisher had kept such an unconscionable time waiting, made their appearance in Tonson's "Sixth Miscellany" on May 2, 1709. The four—Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter—were dedicated respectively to Sir William Trumbull, Dr. Garth, Mr. Wycherley, and the memory of Mrs. Tempest, a Yorkshire lady who was a friend of Walsh's. Pope afterwards wrote a short introduction in prose, from which it appears that he shared the old superstition that pastoral poetry originated in some idyllic or golden age, when the tending of flocks was the chief employment of mankind, and when the shepherds amused their leisure with songs in which they celebrated their own felicity. The modern critic denies the existence of a golden age, and maintains that the pastoral has always made its appearance in the last and most decadent stages of each civilisation, its popularity being due to the longing for rustic simplicity which is the outcome of an artificial state of society. It is the shepherd (and still more the shepherdess)

who yearns for the delights of cities and cou s, while men of fashion and town-bred poets en y the simple souls who, with ribboned crooks a d oaten pipes, are supposed to lead idyllic lives "unc r the hawthorn in the dale."

From his boyhood Pope had ridden through t e green alleys of the great Forest, wandered by t e shining Thames, and rambled over the lovely heat s that surrounded his home, but it does not appe r that he had ever observed nature through his ov n eyes. For him nature was something that h l been discovered, if not created, by the poets. Tl country, as seen through classic glasses, was inhabite by nymphs, fauns, and satyrs, by sighing Strepho and cruel Chloes, rather than by uncouth ploughme and blowsy dairy-maids. The cattle grazing i the field were for him transformed into sacrifici bulls, the harvestmen quenched their thirst wit clusters of grapes instead of flagons of beer, whil Jupiter, Ceres, Bacchus, and the rest of the Olympia crew exercised a personal influence on the crop and the weather. Throughout his life Pope pre ferred "nature to advantage dressed" to natur in the raw, and felt more at home in a garde crammed with obelisks, temples, and mock ruin than in fields or forests.

That the "Pastorals" show the young poet in th imitative stage was only to be expected. A bo who reads incessantly leaves himself no time fo thought or observation. Not only was there nc originality of idea in the "Pastorals," but, as Warton was the first to point out, there was not a single rural image that was new ; the whole might have

been written in the Widow Hambleton's coffee-house. But the boy showed amazing dexterity in fitting the thoughts and words of his great masters —whether ancient or modern—into a mosaic of his own pattern. It was the manner, far more than the matter, that commended the "Pastorals" to Pope's contemporaries. The young man may have learnt his versification from Dryden, but he had made the tune his own, and, like a modern Orpheus, he set the whole world dancing to it. Macaulay declares that, from the time when the "Pastorals" appeared, heroic versification became a matter of rule and compass, and before long all artists were on a level. "Hundreds of dunces who never blundered on one happy thought or expression were able to write reams of couplets which, as far as euphony was concerned, could not be distinguished from those of Pope himself."[1] This, of course, is the exaggeration of prejudice. It may be easy enough to turn out heroic couplets of the most approved pattern, but it is quite another thing to produce poetry in the same measure that is at once brilliant, forcible, and melodious. Pope chose to play on one string, but his music was unapproached by any of his contemporaries.

A host of imitators may have dulled modern ears to his melody, and even brought his instrument into disrepute, but two hundred years ago men stood

[1] Macaulay probably had Cowper's lines about Pope in his mind:

> But he (his musical finesse was such
> So nice his ear, so delicate his touch)
> Made poetry a new mechanic art,
> And every warbler has his tune by heart.

still to listen when a young poet lifted up his vo:e and sang :

> Go, gentle gales, and bear my sighs away !
> To Delia's ear the tender notes convey.
> As some sad turtle his lost love deplores,
> And with deep murmurs fills the sounding shores ;
> Thus, far from Delia, to the winds I mourn,
> Alike unheard, unpitied, and forlorn.
>
> Go, gentle gales, and bear my sighs along !
> The birds shall cease to tune their evening song,
> The winds to breathe, the waving woods to move,
> The streams to murmur, ere I cease to love.
>
> Not bubbling fountains to the thirsty swain,
> Not balmy sleep to lab'rers faint with pain,
> Not showers to larks, or sunshine to the bee,
> Are half so charming as thy sight to me.

What could be more musical or more melancholy But to the modern taste the melody of the lines i less remarkable than the conventionality of th sentiment. Even contemporary critics could perceiv the artificiality of the "Pastorals." The gods anc goddesses that the poet transported to the banks oi the Thames had been somewhat overworked during the preceding century, and the Berkshire local colour, with its satyrs, milk-white bulls, and clustering vines,[1] struck some carping spirits as wanting in realism. Pope accused his rival, Ambrose Philips, of making roses, lilies, and daffodils bloom in the

[1] Pope satirises his own early efforts in the "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot":

> Like gentle Fanny's was my flowery theme,
> A painted mistress, or a purling stream.

same season, but he was himself guilty of the couplet:

> Here the bright crocus and blue vi'let glow,
> Here western winds on breathing roses blow.

That practical gardener, the elder Pope, might have criticised these lines with advantage. But the most irritating fault in these early poems is one which disfigures so much of the eighteenth-century literature, namely, a disinclination to call things or people by their proper names. For example, in the "Pastorals," birds are the "feathered quire," sheep are the "fleecy breed," and, worse still, a garden becomes "the vegetable care."

Tonson's "Miscellany" contained a paraphrase of Chaucer's "January and May" by Pope, pieces by Rowe and Garth, and a rival set of pastorals by Ambrose Philips. Wycherley, who had already paid what he called a "damned fine compliment" in verse upon the appearance of Pope's "Pastorals," wrote on May 17 to thank his young friend for a copy of the "Miscellany" and to assure him that nothing had been better received by the public than his part in it. In fact, he had displeased the critics by pleasing them too well, having left them not a word to say for themselves. "Your Miscellanies," he adds, "have safely run the gauntlet through all the coffee-houses which are now entertained with a whimsical new newspaper, called *The Tatler*,[1] which I suppose you have seen, and is written by one Steele, who thinks himself sharp upon this Iron Age, since an Age of War, and who likewise

[1] *The Tatler* was started by Steele, with Addison's assistance, on April 12th, 1709.

writes the other gazettes, and this under the na[me] of 'Bickerstaff.'"

Pope modestly replied that this modern cust[om] of appearing in Miscellanies was very useful to t[he] poets, who, like other thieves,[1] escaped by getti[ng] into a crowd, and, herded together like banditti, sa[fe] only in their multitude. He could be satisfied [to] lose his time without losing his reputation. "[A]s for getting any, I am as indifferent in the matter [as] Falstaff was, and may say of fame as he did [of] honour: 'If it comes, it comes unlooked-for; a[nd] there's an end on't.' I can be content with a ba[re] saving gain, without being thought 'an emine[nt] hand,' with which little Jacob [Tonson] h[as] graciously dignified his adventurers and voluntee[rs] in poetry."

The friendship between the old dramatist and t[he] youthful poet came to an untimely end. It h[as] generally been believed that Wycherley was annoye[d] because Pope criticised his verses too frankly. Wycherley had desired that any repetitions of wor[ds] or sense should be marked in the margin of h[is] manuscripts, without defacing the copy. Pope, [if] we may accept his letter as genuine, replied wit[h] some asperity that Wycherley had better take bac[k] his manuscript, since merely to mark the "repeti tions" would in no way rectify the method, connec[t] the matter, or improve the poetry in expression o[r] numbers. "As I have often told you," he con cludes, "it is my sincere opinion that the greate[st]

[1] This is probably intended to disarm criticism, since th[e] "Pastorals" consist, in great part, of paraphrases of th[e] "Eclogues" of Virgil.

part would make a much better figure as single maxims and reflections in prose, after the manner of your favourite Rochefoucault, than in verse." This advice could hardly have been very palatable, but that Wycherley meekly followed it is proved by the three hundred and eight maxims in prose which were found among his papers after his death.

There is no trace of resentment in Wycherley's original letters, and Pope admitted to Cromwell that the coolness had been partly caused by the malicious untruths which some evilly disposed person had insinuated to Mr. Wycherley.[1] "If so," he adds, "he [Wycherley] will have a greater punishment than I could wish him in that fellow's acquaintance. The loss of a faithful creature is something, though of never so contemptible a one; and if I were to change my dog for such a man as the aforesaid, I should think my dog under-valued, who follows me about as constantly here in the country, as I was used to do Mr. Wycherley in town."

During the summer of 1710 the young poet suffered from a long illness, contracted in London, where the life may have been stimulating to his mind but was certainly injurious to his body. This was the eventful moment when the Whig dynasty fell with a crash, when the Marlboroughs were disgraced, and Harley and St. John rose to supreme power. Pope had not yet received Addison's advice, "not to be content with the praises of half the nation"; but then, and for many years to come, he kept clear of politics, and made friends with "useful people" of both parties. Of course,

[1] Probably Gildon.

as a Catholic, he could not expect to suppleme
his scanty earnings by a comfortable "place," like
many of his literary friends, but then he was spar
the misery of hope deferred and the indignity
dancing attendance in the ante-chambers of the gre

When once the poet had set up as a man abo
town, he found the simple ways and strict piety
life at Binfield something of a bore. But he h
already acquired the habit of being all things to
men, though less with a view to their salvation th
his own convenience. Thus, in a letter to Cromwe
dated April 10, he apologised for not havi
written sooner, but explained that he had scrupl
to send profane things in Holy Week.

"Besides, our family would have been scandalis
to see me write, who take it for granted I wri
nothing but ungodly verses; and they say here
many prayers that I can make but few poems; f
in this matter of praying I am an occasional co
formist. So, just as I am drunk or scandalous
town, according to my company, I am for the san
reason grave or godly here. I assure you I a
looked on in the neighbourhood for a very sob
and well-disposed person; no great hunter indee
but a great esteemer of the noble sport, and onl
unhappy in my want of constitution for that an
drinking. They all say 'tis pity I am so sickly, an
I think 'tis pity they are so healthy; but I sa
nothing that may destroy their good opinion of me
I have not quoted one Latin author since I cam
down, but have learned without book a song o
Mr. Thomas Durfey's, who is your only poet o
tolerable reputation in this county."

CHAPTER V

1711

The "Essay on Criticism"

THE "Essay on Criticism" was completed, except for the usual retouching and polishing, as early as 1709,[1] but it was not published till 1711. Pope tells us that he first digested all his material in prose, and then versified it with great rapidity. The Essay was regarded as a masterpiece by the eighteenth-century critics, Johnson going so far as to declare that the work exhibited "every mode of excellence that can embellish or dignify didactic composition—selection of matter, novelty of arrangement, justness of precept, splendour of illustration, and propriety of digression." A reaction took place in the critical opinion of the nineteenth century. De Quincey describes the Essay as "a mere versification, like a metrical multiplication-table, of commonplaces the most mouldy with which criticism has baited its rat-traps." The maxims, he contends, have no natural order or logical dependency, and are generally so vague as to mean nothing, while many of the rules are violated by no man so often as by Pope himself.

[1] Pope has not always kept to the same story about the year in which the Essay was written, but 1709 is the date usually given.

Criticism so harsh as this fails to take into account the period at which the Essay appeared and the conditions under which it was composed. It was not put forward as a definitive treatise on criticism, but was literally an "attempt" to methodise the chaotic contents of the young poet's mind, the results of desultory study and undisciplined thought. We see him trying to "hammer out" his literary faith, to formulate a critical creed that would be helpful both to himself and others, and incidentally to give a practical definition of that blessed word "correctness." He is not always sure of his own meaning, he cannot always make it clear to the reader, but when it is remembered that there were at this time no native works dealing with the principles and technicalities of criticism, it will be understood that Pope's "mouldy truisms" may have been regarded as brilliant epigrams or startling paradoxes by the public of his own day.

Pope follows the lead of his master, Dryden, in attacking the false wit, the glittering conceits, and strained similes of the so-called metaphysical poets, among whom Donne, Cowley, and Crashaw were conspicuous. Dryden's famous Prefaces had prepared the way for a poetical reformation. The absurdities and extravagances of the Euphuists and the metaphysical school were already discredited, and the public taste, wearied of intellectual gymnastics and jugglery, showed a reaction in favour of classical methods and classical ideals.

The inevitable swing of the pendulum is represented in the "Essay on Criticism." Here we have the very apotheosis of "True Wit and Good Sense";

but the poet, as he gropes his way towards the light, is not always quite clear which is which. "Sense" is represented as the supreme virtue as well as the highest attribute of reason, while "wit" is a thing of Protean quality, which appears under a dozen different disguises.[1] Pope was not by nature or training well qualified for the production of a long, didactic work. His "staying power" was slight, and there is no sign that he had ever studied the science of logic, at least with any idea of applying its rules to his own reasoning. He has been described as the most inconsequential of all didactic poets in the deduction of his thoughts, and the most severely distressed in any effort to explain the dependency of their parts. "All his thinking," to quote de Quincey again, "proceeded by insulated and discontinuous fits, and the only resource for him, or chance of even seeming correctness, lay in the liberty of stringing his aphoristic thoughts, like pearls, having no relation to each other but that of contiguity." Epigram, however, is commonly accepted as an excellent substitute for argument, and in the eighteenth century it became customary to drive a point home with a couplet from Pope. The couplet might not stand a searching analysis, but its brilliancy was apt to dazzle and confound pure reason.

The "Essay on Criticism" probably contains more "quotations" in proportion to its length than any other work of Pope's, and it may not be

[1] Mr. Elwin points out that we find "wit" doing duty as the intellect, the judgment, the antithesis to judgment, a joke, and poetry!

uninteresting to people who have been "talking Pope" all their lives without knowing it to discover the source of certain now proverbial phrases, and to read them in their proper context. The Essay opens with a witty description of false and foolish critics, which may be summed up in the familiar couplet :

> Some have at first for wits, then poets passed,
> Turned critics next, and proved plain fools at last.

But the true critic, who seeks to give and merit fame, is urged to follow nature and frame his judgment by her just standard.

> Those rules of old discovered, not devised,
> Are nature still, but nature methodised ;
> Nature, like liberty, is but restrained
> By the same laws which first herself ordained.

But, apparently, the only way to follow nature is to become intimately acquainted with the religion, country, genius, and character of the ancients.

> Be Homer's works your study and delight,
> Read them by day, and meditate by night.

Though the critic is to learn for ancient rules a just esteem, he must recognise that a "master-hand" may deviate from the common track, since—

> Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
> And rise to faults true critics dare not mend ;
> From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
> And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art.

Part I. concludes with an invocation to the "bards triumphant" who were born in happier days, and the pious prayer—

O may some spark of your celestial fire,
The last, the meanest of your sons inspire
(That on weak wings, from far, pursues your flights;
Glows while he reads, but trembles as he writes),
To teach vain wits a science little known,
T' admire superior sense, and doubt their own!

In Part II. the critic is shown the causes that hinder true judgment, such as Pride, Envy, Prejudice, Party Spirit, and Imperfect Knowlege. It is in connection with the last mentioned that our old acquaintance comes in :

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.

After giving some examples of dull or malignant critics, the poet explains that—

True wit is nature to advantage dressed;
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.

Some critics, it is pointed out, care only for the style of a poet, and some for the music of his song. Others, again, swear only by foreign writers, and despise the native breed :

Thus wit, like faith, by each man is applied
To one small sect, and all are damned beside.

The author is most severe, however, upon the servile critic who is a hanger-on of great men, and only lives to fetch and carry nonsense for my lord.

What woeful stuff this madrigal would be
In some starved hackney sonneteer or me!

> But let a lord once own the happy lines,
> How the wit brightens! how the style refines![1]

Pope was always given to damning the sins he was himself inclined to, and therefore, though his rhymes were his weakest point, it is not surprising to find him making merry at the expense of the poetaster who indulged in feeble or commonplace rhymes. The following lines might have been written about his own "Pastorals":

> Where'er you find "the cooling western breeze,"
> In the next line it "whispers through the trees";
> If crystal streams "with pleasing murmurs creep,"
> The reader's threatened, not in vain, with "sleep."

His own indifference to good rhymes is shown in another couplet which conveys a precept that he never practised:

> Leave dangerous truths to unsuccessful satires,
> And flattery to fulsome dedicators.

And again:

> Good nature and good sense must ever join;
> To err is human; to forgive divine.

The noble minds are to discharge their rage on such unpardonable crimes as irreligion and obscenity. In a brilliant passage the poet holds up to condemnation the licentious times that followed the Restoration:

> When love was all an easy monarch's care;
> Seldom at Council, never in a war.
> Jilts ruled the State, and statesmen farces writ;
> Nay, wits had pensions, and young lords had wit

[1] Pope himself seems to have been blinded by Granville's rank to the weakness of Granville's verse.

The fair sat panting at a courtier's play,
And not a mask went unimproved away;
The modest fan was lifted up no more,
And virgins smiled at what they blushed before.

Part III. gives rules for the conduct of a critic—modesty, candour, sincerity, and good-breeding—together with a brief history of criticism and the characters of famous critics. Referring to the "bookful blockhead, ignorantly read," the poet exclaims

No place so sacred from such fops is barred,
Nor is Paul's church more safe than Paul's churchyard.[1]
Nay, fly to altars;[2] there they'll talk you dead:
For fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

The ideal critic, who alone can bestow valuable counsel, is pleased to teach, but not too proud to learn:

Unbiassed, or by favour or by spite;
Not dully prepossessed nor blindly right;
Though learn'd, well-bred; and though well-bred, sincere;
Modestly bold, and humanly severe.

Such critics there had been in ancient days, from the time when "the mighty Stagyrite[3] first left the shore." Horace had charmed men into sense, Dionysius had refined on Homer's thoughts, in grave Quintilian might be found the "justest rules

[1] Down to the middle of the seventeenth century the body of St. Paul's Cathedral was the common resort of the politicians, the newsmongers, and the idle in general. It was called "Paul's Walk."—[Pennant.]

[2] This is imitated from some lines of Boileau, which allude to the impertinence of a French poet, Du Perrier, who insisted on reciting an ode to him during the elevation of the host.

[3] Aristotle, who was called the Stagyrite because he was born at Stagyra.

and clearest method joined," while bold Longinus "with warmth gives sentence, yet is always just."

But then followed the dark ages that "saw learning fall and Rome," when tyranny enslaved the body and superstition the mind, till—

> At length Erasmus, that great injured name,
> (The glory of the priesthood and the shame!)
> Stemmed the wild torrent of a barb'rous age,
> And drove those holy Vandals off the stage.

The poet passes on to the golden days of the Renaissance, when "a Raphael painted and a Vida sung"—

> Immortal Vida! on whose honoured brow
> The poet's bays and critic's ivy grow.

Chased from Latium,[1] the Muses overstepped their ancient boundaries, and the arts were introduced into the northern world:

> But critic-learning flourished most in France;
> The rules a nation, born to serve, obeys;
> And Boileau still in right of Horace sways.

The Britons despised these foreign laws, and, fierce for the liberties of wit, remained unconquered and uncivilised. A few there were, however, of sounder judgment who asserted the truth of the ancient cause—"and here restored wit's fundamental laws." Among these are cited the Duke of Buckingham,[2] Roscommon[3] and Walsh, "the Muse's judge and friend." Pope has been condemned for mentioning

[1] According to Warburton, Pope refers to the sack of Rome by the Duke of Bourbon, which, he suggests, had driven poetry out of Italy.

[2] On account of his "Art of Poetry."

[3] On account of his "Essay on Translated Verse."

these minor writers and ignoring all the great poets of recent times save Dryden, but obviously he quoted the names of the few English authors who had concerned themselves with the principles of literary criticism. It is at the end of his panegyric on Walsh that Pope introduced the egoistical "tag" with which so many of his early works conclude. As this passage is interesting from the personal point of view, it may be quoted at length :

> This humble praise, lamented shade,[1] receive !
> This praise at least a grateful muse may give.
> The muse, whose early voice you taught to sing,
> Prescribed her heights, and pruned her tender wing
> (Her guide now lost), no more attempts to rise,
> But in low numbers short excursions tries;
> Content, if hence th' unlearned their wants may view,
> The learn'd reflect on what before they knew:
> Careless of censure, nor too fond of fame;
> Still pleased to praise, yet not afraid to blame,
> Averse alike to flatter, or offend;
> Not free from faults, nor yet too vain to mend.

The "Essay on Criticism" had no immediate popular success. It was published anonymously, and hung fire for the first three or four weeks. At length the poet sent round copies to several "noblemen of taste," and, the authorship becoming known, a vivid interest was presently aroused in the piece. Pope declared that he did not expect a thousand copies to sell, since "not one gentleman in sixty, even of liberal education, could understand it." This does not say much for the intelligence of the gentlemen of the period. The gospel of "good sense" preached throughout the poem was received

[1] Walsh had died in 1708, aged 49.

with extraordinary fervour, and as time went on made innumerable converts—not to say devotees. The seed sown by Pope had fallen on good ground and multiplied an hundredfold, insomuch that throughout the greater part of the eighteenth century "good sense" was the accepted religion of the nation. The English people is never happy without a catch-word or catch-phrase which is sufficiently elastic to be of almost universal application and sufficiently vague to be interpreted according to individual pleasure or convenience. Pope contributed an enormous number of catch-phrases to the general stock, with the result that he was unofficially elected "Moralist in Chief" to the British nation.

The amount of learning displayed in the Essay was regarded as almost miraculous, considering the age of the author. How was it possible that "one small head could carry all he knew"? Even Hazlitt professed himself unable to account for the phenomenon, save on the supposition that "men of genius spend the rest of their lives in teaching others what they themselves have learned under twenty." It was reserved for a modern critic of the anti-Popish school,[1] to point out that the poet in his boyhood had read a number of French critical works, and had been especially impressed by the writings of Racine and Bossu, whose treatises were shallow productions, compounded of truisms, pedantic fallacies, and doctrines borrowed from antiquity. A good deal of the classical information embodied in the Essay might have been picked up from these French manuals in a single morning. It

[1] The late Mr. Whitwell Elwin.

is tolerably clear that Pope had not read all the classical authors whom he cites, or he would not have penned the couplet:

> Fancy and art in gay Petronius please,
> The scholar's learning with the courtier's ease.

But whatever the extent or the limitation of Pope's reading, the fact remains that he had displayed in this new poem a style which, in point and brilliancy, surpassed that of any other living writer. A certain impetus was given to the circulation of the new work by the appearance of a violent pamphlet by John Dennis,[1] the critic, entitled, "Reflections, Critical and Satyrical, upon a late Rhapsody called 'An Essay on Criticism.'" Dennis and Blackmore were the only living writers satirised in the Essay; Dennis because, it is supposed, he had adversely criticised Pope's "Pastorals," and Blackmore because he had attacked Dryden. The offending lines were impertinent rather than actually malicious. After urging the desirability of critical candour, the poet proceeds:

[1] John Dennis (1657–1734). Though only the son of a saddler, he was educated at Harrow and Caius College, Cambridge. He attracted the attention of the Duke of Marlborough by writing in favour of the war, and was given a place as royal waiter in the Port of London. He wrote poems in the Pindaric style, tragedies, comedies, and critical pamphlets. He published in 1703 a treatise on "The Danger of Priestcraft to Religion and Government," which was probably one of the reasons why Pope attacked him. He brought out "The Impartial Critic" in 1693, and "The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry" in 1703. His tragedy *Appius and Virginia* had a short run at Drury Lane in 1709, and early in 1711 he published "Three Letters on the Genius of Shakespeare." Dennis was no doubt angry that Pope had not mentioned him among those literary critics who had "restored wit's fundamental laws."

'Twere well might critics still this freedom take,
But Appius reddens at each word you speak,
And stares, tremendous, with a threatening eye,
Like some fierce tyrant in old tapestry.

Appius was the hero of Dennis's unsuccessful tragedy, and his favourite literary epithet was "tremendous." The old critic was infuriated by what he described as an insult to his person, and he lost no time in concocting a reply. In the pamphlet, which appeared on June 20, Pope, for the first time, was subjected to scurrilous abuse in the guise of criticism. Dennis begins by complaining that he found himself "attacked, without any manner of provocation on his side, and attacked in his person instead of his writings, by one who was wholly a stranger to him, at a time when all the world knew he was persecuted by fortune; and not only saw that this was attempted in a clandestine manner, with the utmost falsehood and calumny, but found that all this was done by a little affected hypocrite, who had nothing in his mouth, at the same time, but truth, candour, friendship, good nature, humanity, and magnanimity." He declares that this young raw author had rashly undertaken a task beyond his powers, had borrowed from living and dead, frequently contradicted himself, and was almost perpetually in the wrong.

Among the blunders pointed out by Dennis was one at least which Pope thought worth correcting, the "bull" contained in the following lines:

What is this wit? . . . .
Where wanted, scorned, and envied where acquired.

Wit could not, of course, be scorned where it did not exist, unless indeed by the person who wanted it.[1]

But the personal criticism was far more violent and abusive than the literary criticism. Among other amenities, Pope is described as a "hunch-backed toad." "I remember," proceeds the enraged critic, "a little gentleman whom Mr. Walsh used to take into his company, as a double foil to his person and capacity. Inquire between Sunninghill and Oakingham for a young, short, squat gentleman, the very bow of the god of love, and tell me whether he be a proper author to make personal reflections? . . . Let the person of a gentleman of his parts be never so contemptible, his inward man is ten times more ridiculous; it being impossible that his outward form, though it be that of a downright monkey, should differ so much from human shape as his unthinking, immaterial part does from human understanding."

Pope seemed at first quite stunned and bewildered by this unexpected onslaught. He was uncertain how to take it, whether with philosophic contempt or with counter violence. Writing to Cromwell three days after the appearance of the pamphlet, he says that he is impatiently expecting a visit from his friend. "A little room and a little heart are both at your service, and you may be secure of being easy in your own way, though not happy; for you shall go just your own way and keep your own hours, which is more than can be done often in places of greater entertainment. . . .

[1] Pope changed the line to—

And still the more we give, the more required.

P.S.—Pray bring a very considerable number of pint-bottles with you. This might seem a strange odd request, if you had not told me you would stay but as many days as you brought bottles. . . . Mr. Lintot favoured me with a sight of Mr. Dennis's piece of fine satire before it was published. I desire you to read it and give me your opinion in what manner it ought to be answered."

The subject was further discussed in letters with a new friend, who about this time made his appearance in the correspondence. This was Mr. John Caryll, a Catholic gentleman, who lived at Ladyholt, in Sussex.[1] Being related to the Englefields of Whiteknights and the Blounts of Mapledurham, he had no doubt made Pope's acquaintance through the agency of one of these families. The correspondence seems to have begun in July 1710, but did not become intimate or frequent till the following year.

On June 25, 1711, Pope sends Caryll Dennis's pamphlet, which, he says, "equally abounds in just criticisms and fine railleries. I am of opinion that such a critic as you will find him, by the latter part of his book, is in no way to be properly answered but by a wooden weapon, and I should perhaps have sent him a present from Windsor Forest of one of the best and toughest oaken plants between Sunninghill and Oakingham, if he had not informed me in his Preface that he is at this time persecuted

[1] Caryll had another estate at East Grinstead, where he sometimes resided. He was nephew to the Caryll who followed James II. into exile, and was by him created a peer. Pope's friend, as next heir, was called "Honourable" by the Jacobite party.

by fortune. This, I protest, I knew not the least of before; if I had, his name had been spared in the Essay for that only reason. I cannot conceive what ground he has for so excessive a resentment, nor imagine how these three lines can be called a reflection on his person which only describe his being subject a little to colour and stare on some occasions, which are revolutions that happen sometimes in the best and most regular faces in Christendom. . . . Yet, to give this man his due, he has objected to one or two lines with reason, and I will alter them in the case of another edition."

In a later letter to Caryll Pope says that he is resolved never to make the least reply to Dennis's attacks, because he is of opinion that if a book cannot answer for itself to the public it is to no sort of purpose for its author to do so. Besides, Dennis's onslaught has really been of advantage to him by making him friends and open abettors of several gentlemen of known sense and wit, and of proving to him that his trifles are taken some notice of by the world in general. At this time, and throughout his whole life, Pope professed to despise his own productions. In reply to compliments from Caryll, he protests: "I know too well the vast difference between those who truly deserve the name of poets and men of wit and one who is nothing but what he owes to them; and I keep the pictures of Dryden, Milton, Shakespeare, etc., in my chamber round about me, that the constant remembrance of them may keep me always humble."

CHAPTER VI

1711

New Literary Projects—"The Unfortunate Lady"

THE "Essay on Criticism," following as it did upon the successful "Pastorals," brought the author fresh reputation among his friends, and introduced him to several new and distinguished acquaintances in the literary world. It is in July 1711 that Steele makes his first appearance among Pope's correspondents. He writes to ask the young poet whether he is at leisure "to help Mr. Clayton, that is me, to some words for music against Christmas." This request inspired the "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day"—an unfortunate choice of subject, since Pope's Ode had to stand comparison with Dryden's Ode.

On December 20 a belated review by Addison of the "Essay on Criticism" appeared in *The Spectator*.[1] The notice was generally considered a favourable one, though the tendency to "hint a fault" and "damn with faint praise" is not altogether absent. Still, Addison sets out by describing the Essay as a masterpiece of its kind, and continues :

"The observations follow one another like those

[1] *The Tatler* had come to an end in January 1711, and had been succeeded by *The Spectator*, under the joint management of Steele and Addison, in the following March.

in Horace's 'Art of Poetry,' without the methodical regularity which would have been requisite in a prose author. They are some of them uncommon, but such as the reader must assent to when he sees them explained with that elegance and perspicuity in which they are delivered. As for those which are the most known, and the most received, they are placed in so beautiful a light, and illustrated with such apt allusions, that they have in them all the graces of novelty, and make the reader, who was before acquainted with them, still more convinced of their truth and solidity."

There is a more acrid note in the remark that "in England a man seldom sets up for a poet without attacking the reputation of all his brothers in the art. The ignorance of the moderns, the scribblers of the age, the decay of poetry, are the topics of detraction with which he makes his entrance into the world. I am sorry to find that an author, who is very justly esteemed among the best judges, has admitted some strokes of this kind into a very fine poem—I mean the 'Art of Criticism.'"

Pope was delighted with the praise and, for once, bowed his neck to the blame.[1] He took for granted that the article was by Steele, to whom he wrote a letter of thanks on December 30. He has been spending Christmas with some honest country gentle-

[1] Alluding to his early critics in "The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," Pope writes:

> Yet then did Dennis rave in furious fret?
> I never answered—I was not in debt.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Did some more sober critic come abroad?
> If wrong, I smiled; if right, I kissed the rod.

men, who never read *The Spectator*, and he has, therefore, only just seen the number of December 20, "wherein, though it be the highest satisfaction to find oneself commended by a person whom all the world commends, yet I am not more obliged to you for that than for your candour and frankness in acquainting me with the error I have been guilty of in speaking too freely of my brother moderns. . . . But if ever this Essay be thought worth a second edition, I shall be very glad to strike out all such strokes which you shall be so kind as to point out to me."

Steele wrote to explain that the review of Pope's poem "was written by one with whom I will make you acquainted, which is the best return I can make you for your favour." Thus we may suppose that early in this year, 1712, Pope was introduced to Addison, who had lately migrated with his following from Will's to Button's coffee-house, where he now "gave his little senate laws."

John Gay now makes his first appearance on the scene. He was three years older than Pope, having been born at Barnstaple in 1685. Left an orphan at the age of ten, he was apprenticed, as soon as his school-days were over, to a silk mercer in London. But Gay felt that he was intended for better things than to serve behind a counter. He contrived to obtain his freedom before his articles were out, and, after staying with relations at Barnstaple for some months, he returned to London, where in May, 1708, he made his literary début with a poem in blank verse called "Wine," an imitation of John Philip's "Cider." How he lived during the years immediately

following this effort has never been made clear. He was presumably engaged in some kind of literary hackwork for the booksellers.

The first mention of him in Pope's correspondence appears in a letter to Cromwell (December 31, 1711), in which the poet says: "I would willingly return Mr. Gay my thanks for the favour of his poem, and in particular for his kind mention of me." This is probably an allusion to Gay's "Lines on a Miscellany of Poems," addressed to Bernard Lintot, and published in the "Miscellany" issued by Lintot in May, 1712. After alluding to various other writers, Gay proceeds:

> When Pope's harmonious muse with pleasure roves,
> Amidst the plains, the murm'ring streams and groves,
> Attentive Echo, pleased to hear his songs,
> Through the glad shade each warbling note prolongs;
> His various numbers charm our ravished ears,
> His early judgment far outstript his years,
> And early in the youth the god appears.

Down to this period we have heard but little of any women acquaintance except the two Sapphos, though Pope was accustomed to drag in a knowing allusion to the "fair sex" when writing to Cromwell, who, a man of the world in his rough way, seldom or never took any notice of these insinuations. He prided himself on being a *littérateur* as well as a rake, and his friendship with Pope was founded on their common taste for literature. At this time he was urging the poet to try his hand at a drama.

"Leave elegy and translation to the inferior class," he had written (December 7, 1711), "on whom the Muses only glance now and then, like our winter

snow, and then leave them in the dark. Think on the dignity of tragedy, which is of the greater poetry, as Dennis says, and foil him at his other weapon, as you have done in criticism. Every one wonders that a genius like yours will not support the sinking drama; and Mr. Wilks,[1] though I think his talent is comedy, has expressed a glorious ambition to swell in your buskins. We have had a poor comedy of Johnson's[2] (not Ben) which held seven nights, and got him three hundred pounds; for the town is sharp-set on new plays."

Betterton,[3] too, was desirous that Pope should turn his boyish epic into a tragedy, but the young man, as soon as he got well acquainted with the town, took a firm resolution against writing for the stage. He had been quick to see "how much everybody that did write for the stage was obliged to submit themselves to the players and the town." Just at this time, too, there were special reasons why he felt disinclined to embark upon any piece of work so difficult and so hazardous to a rising reputation, as a play. He had been improving his acquaintance with the two fair daughters of Mr. Blount of Mapledurham. This ancient Catholic family consisted at this time of Mr. Lister Blount, his son Michael,

[1] Robert Wilks, the famous actor (1665–1732). He was associated in the management of Drury Lane with Cibber and Doggett for nearly twenty years, from 1711.

[2] Charles Johnson (1679–1748). He wrote a large number of long-forgotten plays and was satirised in "The Dunciad."

[3] Thomas Betterton, the tragedian (1635–1710). Pope had early made his acquaintance, and entertained for him a high regard. After Betterton's death the poet arranged for the publication of some of his Chaucerian writings in a "Miscellany," the profits being given to his widow.

and two daughters, "the fair-haired Martha and Teresa brown." Teresa and Pope were born in the same year, and Martha was two years younger. There is probably an allusion to the sisters in Pope's reply to Cromwell's request that he should write a play.

"Every moment my eyes are employed upon the paper they are taken off from two of the finest faces in the universe. But indeed it is some consolation to me to consider that, while I but write this period, I escape some hundred darts from those unerring eyes, and about a thousand deaths, or better. . . . Indeed, indeed, my friend, you could never have found so improper a time to tempt me with interest or ambition. Let me but have the reputation of these in my keeping, and as for my own, let the devil or let Dennis take it for ever. How gladly would I give all I am worth, that is to say, my 'Pastorals,' for one of them, and my Essay for the other. I would lay out all my poetry in love, an original for a lady and a translation for a waiting-maid! . . . Alas! what have I to do with Jane Grey, as long as Miss Molly, Miss Betty, or Miss Patty are in this world? Shall I write of beauties murdered long ago when there are those at this instant that murder me? I will e'en compose my own tragedy, and the poet shall appear in his own person to move compassion."

But the Miss Blounts were not the only ladies in whom Pope was warmly interested at this time. In the summer of 1711 he first began to concern himself about the matrimonial troubles of a certain Mrs. Weston, who is commonly supposed to be the

original of the Unfortunate Lady of the famous Elegy. Mrs. Weston was the daughter of Joseph Gage, of Firle, a Roman Catholic, and she was married to John Weston, of Sutton, in Surrey. The marriage was an unhappy one, and husband and wife were temporarily separated. Mr. Weston wished to claim his infant daughter. Sir William Goring, Mrs. Weston's guardian, refused to interfere, and the young wife had some thoughts of retiring into a convent. The Roman Catholic families in the neighbourhood seem to have taken sides in the affair, and Pope, who had a quixotic streak in his composition, came forward as the ardent champion of Mrs. Weston, who, by the way, does not appear to have shown much gratitude for his support. That he was a little in love with her, and believed himself to be nursing a silent, hopeless passion, may be gathered from a passage in a letter he wrote to her on hearing of her intention to enter a convent. After urging her to continue in the world, if only for the sake of the world, he proceeds, in the superfine style he kept for his female friends :

"Wheresoever Providence shall dispose of the most valuable thing I know, I shall ever follow you with my sincerest wishes, and my best thoughts will be perpetually waiting upon you, when you never hear of me or them. Your own guardian angels cannot be more constant, or more silent. . . ."

Pope's interference in this domestic broil brought him some good "copy," and the annoyance that usually follows an attempt to put a finger in a cleft stick. He fell foul of his half-sister, Mrs. Rackett

and her husband because, as neighbours of the Westons, they refused to quarrel with the tyrannical husband, and he stirred up his friends the Carylls and Mrs. "Sappho" Nelson to intercede with the apathetic guardian, Sir William Goring. In a letter to Caryll, of June 18, 1711, he begs his friend to let him know the result of a conference with Sir William, and adds:

"Unless you have already done it to her, I shall be glad to inform her [Mrs. Weston], to whom every little prospect of ease is a great relief in these circumstances. I am certain a letter from yourself or lady would be a much greater consolation to her than your humility will afford either of you to imagine. To relieve the injured—if you will pardon a poetical expression in prose—is no less than to take the work of God Himself off His hands, and an easing Providence of its care."

The "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady" was not published till 1717, but, as it was probably written about this period, it may best be dealt with here. The poem appears to be written round a lady who committed suicide in a foreign land, deserted by her friends because she had loved too well. The story was thus only remotely connected with that of Mrs. Weston, who died in her bed seven years after the poem appeared; but there is a realistic touch in the denunciation of "the false guardian of a charge too good," the "mean deserter of a brother's blood." The poet, in impassioned lines, calls down Heaven's vengeance on the heads of the whole family, their wives and their children, and assures them that frequent funerals shall besiege

their gates. Then, in lines that were once vastly admired for their pathos and eloquence, he asks:

> What can atone, O ever injured shade!
> Thy fate unpitied, and thy rites unpaid?
> No friend's complaint, no kind domestic tear
> Pleased thy pale ghost or graced thy mournful bier.
> By foreign hands thy dying eyes were closed,
> By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed,
> By foreign hands thy humble grave adorned,
> By strangers honoured, and by strangers mourned.

After a musical, though artificial, description of the lady's tomb, with its early roses and silver-winged angels, we come to the usual little biographical hint in the concluding lines:

> Poets themselves must fall, like those they sung,
> Deaf the praised ear and mute the tuneful tongue.
> Ev'n he whose soul now melts in mournful lays
> Shall shortly want the generous tear he pays.
> Then from his closing eyes thy form shall part,
> And the last pang shall tear thee from his heart;
> Life's idle business at one gasp be o'er,
> The muse forgot, and thou beloved no more!

This Elegy, together with the "Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard," was supposed to prove Pope's mastery over the pathetic. It was claimed that no one could read it without being moved to tears. But in truth the pathos has acquired, with the passing of years, a somewhat hollow ring. The poem sounds, to modern ears, like the *tour de force* of a young man who really enjoyed the luxury of woe. Pale ghosts and decent limbs and kind domestic tears no longer move us with a sense of anything but boredom. But naturally, when the Elegy appeared, with that tantalising little personal note at the end, the poet's

friends were much "intrigued," and begged to know the name and actual story of the Unfortunate Lady. But Pope, whose unhappy love for the victim was as much a myth as his passionate regret for her imaginary fate, persistently evaded all inquiries. The consequence was that a series of sensational legends was woven around the commonplace story. One solemn biographer declared that the Unfortunate Lady had been forced abroad by her cruel guardian in consequence of an unsuitable love-affair, and that, wearying of her exile, she put an end to her troubles with a sword. Another had heard that Voltaire had told Condorcet that she nursed a hopeless passion for the Duc de Berry, and that she took her life with a noose. A third had discovered that she was a deformed lady who was madly in love with Pope, and destroyed herself because her guardian would not consent to the *mésalliance*. The end of the whole matter is that little Mrs. Weston, of Sutton, has attained a lasting fame, and figures, with Patty Blount and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, as one of the ladies whom Pope adored and sang.

CHAPTER VII

1712

"The Messiah"—"The Rape of the Lock"

POPE had been invited by Steele to contribute to *The Spectator*, and in the number for May 14, 1712, appeared "The Messiah, an Imitation of Virgil's 'Pollio.'"[1] Steele introduced the poem to his readers in terms of the most friendly flattery. "I will make no apology," he writes, "for entertaining the reader with the following poem, which is written by a great genius, a friend of mine in the country, who is not ashamed to employ his wit in the praise of his Maker."

He assured the author privately that all the sublimity of the original had been preserved, and that the piece was superior to the "Pollio." But from the modern point of view Isaiah, on whose prophecies the work was based, does not appear "to advantage dressed" in eighteenth-century costume, and the poem, though admired by Pope's

[1] In his advertisement to the poem Pope said that, in reading several passages of the prophet Isaiah, he could not but observe a remarkable resemblance between many of the thoughts and those in the "Pollio" of Virgil, which was taken from a Sibylline prophecy. "The Messiah," he explains, was written with this particular view, "that the reader, by comparing the several thoughts, might see how far the images and descriptions of the prophet are superior to those of the poet."

contemporaries, has made no very strong appeal to later critics.

The taste which held that Isaiah had been "improved upon" may be gauged by a comparison between one of the prophecies of the Oriental seer and its flowery paraphrase by the Queen Anne poet. Thus, Isaiah looks forward to that millennial day when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the den of the cockatrice."

Pope, no doubt, found it quite an easy task to transform the prophecy into smooth, melodious verse:

> The lambs with wolves shall graze the verdant mead,
> And boys in flowery bands the tiger lead;
> The steer and lion at one crib shall meet,
> And harmless serpents lick the pilgrim's feet.
> The smiling infant in his hand shall take
> The crested basilisk and speckled snake,
> Pleased, the green lustre of the scales survey,
> And with their forky tongues shall innocently play.[1]

A little later in the month of May appeared the "Miscellany" of Bernard Lintot, upon which Gay

[1] "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd" is rendered, "As the good shepherd tends his fleecy care." Again, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose" is thus paraphrased:

> The swain in barren deserts with surprise
> Sees lilies spring, and sudden verdure rise.

had written his laudatory verses. This contained Pope's paraphrase of "The Wife of Bath," his translation of the first book of the "Thebais" of Statius, the "Lines to a Young Lady," and the original draft of what was to prove the most popular of his works, "The Rape of the Lock."[1] The draft consisted of only two cantos, and had been dashed off, so the poet declared, in a fortnight. The poem itself must be considered in its completed state; it will be sufficient here to glance at the incidents which led to its composition.

The young Lord Petre[2] had playfully cut a lock from the head of that famous beauty, Miss Arabella Fermor, daughter of Mr. Fermor of Tusmore. Both families were Catholics, and both were friends of the Carylls. A quarrel arising out of the theft, Caryll suggested that Pope should write a good-humoured skit on the subject, in the hope of reconciling the parties to the squabble. This manœuvre was not a striking success. The poet was barely acquainted with the lady, who seems to have felt rather insulted than soothed by his tribute, while Sir George Brown, of Keddington, the original of Sir Plume, was naturally indignant at being exhibited in a ridiculous light.

For some time before its publication the poem had been handed round in manuscript, and as late

[1] The "Miscellany" also contained "Chaucer's Characters; or, The Introduction to the Canterbury Tales," by Thomas Betterton. These "Characters" are believed to have been corrected, if not actually written, by Pope himself, who published them for the benefit of Betterton's widow.

[2] Robert, seventh Baron Petre. He died in 1713, aged only twenty-two.

as May 15 Caryll wrote to ask, "But where hangs the Lock now? Though, I know that, rather than draw any just reflection upon yourself of the least shadow of ill nature, you would freely have suppressed one of the best of your poems." Again, a copy of the "Miscellany" was sent by Pope to Martha Blount on May 25, with the following letter, which proves that his principal contribution had long been familiar to her:

"MADAM,

"At last I do myself the honour to send you 'The Rape of the Lock,' which has been so long coming out that the lady's charms might have been half decayed while the poet was celebrating them and the printer publishing them. But yourself and your fair sister must needs have been surfeited already with this trifle; and therefore, you have no hopes of entertainment, but from the rest of this book, wherein (they tell me) are some things that may be dangerous to be looked upon: however, I venture to think you may venture, though you should blush for it, since blushing[1] becomes you the best of any lady in England, and the most dangerous thing to be looked upon is yourself. Indeed, madam, not to flatter you, our virtue will be sooner overthrown by one glance of yours than by all the wicked poets can write in an age, as has been too dearly experienced by the wickedest of them all, that is to say, by,

"Madam, your most obedient, etc."

[1] This was probably an allusion to the grossness of "The Wife of Bath," though it might also apply to the flattery contained in the "Lines to a Young Lady."

The poem entitled "Lines to a Young Lady, with the Works of Voiture," is now known as the "Epistle to Miss Blount."[1] The verses open with a well-turned tribute to Voiture, whose death is said to have been deplored by rival wits, and mourned by the gay who never mourned before.

> The truest hearts for Voiture heaved with sighs,
> Voiture was wept by all the brightest eyes.

The poet proceeds to warn his lady against too hastily assuming the chains of matrimony. Not being in a position to marry himself, he was probably jealous of the eligible lovers who were fluttering round the charming Martha Blount. In true "feminist" style he deplores the severity of the forms and customs by which women are oppressed.

> By nature yielding, stubborn but for fame;
> Made slaves by honour, and made fools by shame;
> Marriage may all those petty tyrants chase,
> But sets up one, a greater, in their place.

Miss Blount is exhorted, in a passage that could scarcely have commended itself to her parents, not to quit

> The free innocence of life
> For the dull glory of a virtuous wife.

The mournful fate of an imaginary Pamela is described. The gods had cursed Pamela with her prayers, had given her the shining robes, rich jewels, gilt coach and Flanders mares, for which her soul had craved, and—to complete her bliss—a fool for mate.

[1] Published in Pope's works as Epistle IX.

> She glares in balls, front boxes and the Ring,
> A vain, unquiet, glittering, wretched thing!
> Pride, pomp, and state but reach the outward part;
> She sighs, and is no duchess at her heart.

But if Miss Blount is destined to be "Hymen's willing victim," she is advised not to trust too much to her resistless charms, since love that is raised on beauty will as soon decay.

> Good humour only teaches charms to last,
> Still makes new conquests, and maintains the past.

It was through good humour, charm, and wit that Voiture and his ladies still lived and still charmed.

> Now crowned with myrtle on the Elysian coast,
> Amid those lovers, joys his gentle ghost:
> Pleased, while with smiles his happy lines you view,
> And finds a fairer Rambouillet[1] in you.
> The brightest eyes of France inspired his Muse,
> The brightest eyes of Britain now peruse;
> And dead, as living, 'tis our author's pride
> Still to charm those who charm the world beside.

That Pope made some stay in London during the spring of 1712 may be inferred from the fact that he had a bad attack of illness in the summer. In a letter to Steele (July 15) he moralises on the blessings of ill health in his best copy-book fashion. The danger that threatened him he regarded as an advantage to his youth, since he was undazzled by the attractions of the world, and began, where most people end, with a full conviction of

[1] Mademoiselle de Rambouillet, daughter of the Marquise de Rambouillet, whose house was the centre of the society in which Voiture shone.

the emptiness of all sorts of ambition, and the unsatisfactoriness of all human pleasures. "When a smart fit of sickness tells me this scurvy tenement of my body will fall in a little time, I am even as unconcerned as was that honest Hibernian who, being in bed in the great storm some years ago, and told the house would tumble over his head, made answer, 'What care I for the house? I am only a lodger.'"

On the day that this letter was written Mr. Caryll's son was married to Lady Mary McKensie, and Pope, who had advised the bridegroom to "fear the Lord, love his lady, and read *The Tatler*," was invited to accompany the happy pair to Ladyholt for a couple of months. The invitation was, no doubt, prompted by a kindly thought, since his circumstances may not have allowed of the change that his health needed, but the choice of *tertium quid* seems a curious one. Pope himself felt the strangeness of his position, for he wrote to the elder Caryll: "As no happiness comes without some alloy, so it seems the young gentleman must carry me down with his fair lady; and I shall supply the place of the Egyptian skeleton at the entertainments on your return.[1] But I shall be satisfied to make an odd figure in your triumphs for the pleasure I shall take in attending them."

Marvellous to relate, the honeymoon waxed and waned, and the oddly assorted trio still remained on terms of peace and amity. In November Pope, now back at Binfield, wrote the bridegroom a long and cordial letter, in which he gave some account of

[1] Caryll was going to France for a few weeks on business.

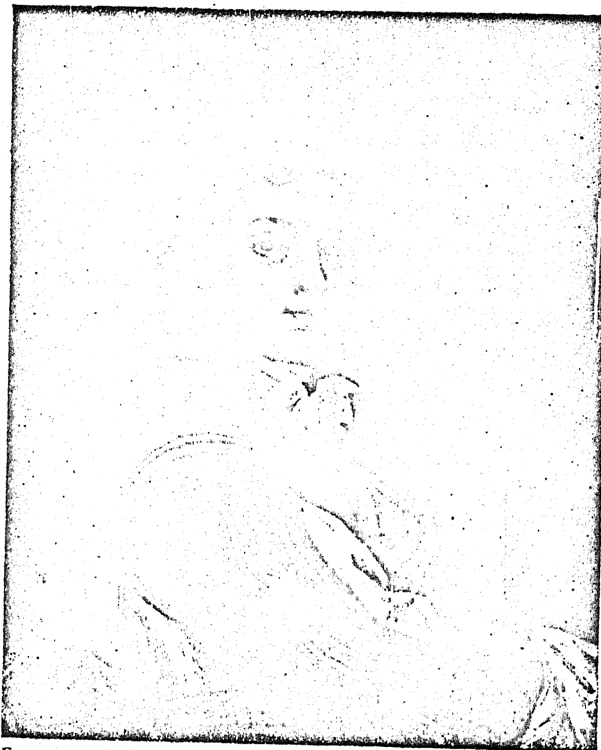
the troubles that his quixotic actions had brought upon him.

"Sir Plume blusters, I hear; nay, the celebrated lady herself is offended, and, which is stranger, Mr. W[eston], they say, is gloomy upon the matter —the tyrant meditates revenge; nay, the distressed dame herself has been taught to suspect I served her but by halves, and without prudence. Is not this enough to make a man for the future neither presume to blame injustice nor pity ignorance, as in Mrs. Weston's case; to make a writer never be tender of another's character or fame, as in Belinda's; to act with more reserve and write with less?

A month later Mr. Weston was still glooming and Sir Plume still blustering—he had indeed threatened the poet with a beating. "Whipped wits," wrote Pope, "like whipped creams, afford a sweet and delectable syllabub to the taste of the town, and often please them better with the dessert than all the meal they had before. So if Sir Plume should take the pains to dress me, I might possibly make the last course better than the first. When a stale, cold fool is well heated and hashed by a satirical cook, he may be tossed up into a kickshaw not disagreeable."

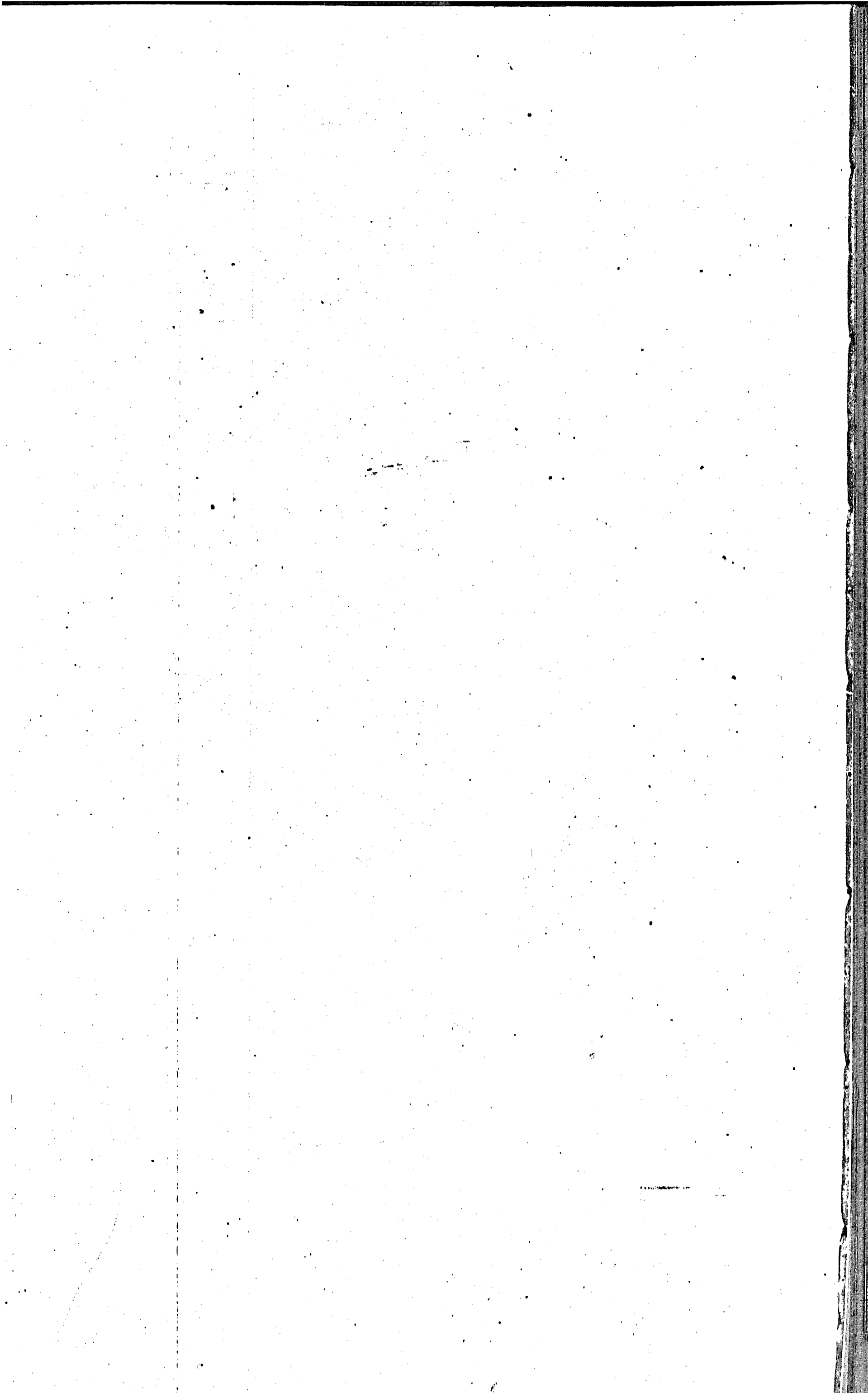
In the course of this winter (1712–13) Pope finished a poem called "The Temple of Fame,"[1] which he begged Steele to read and correct. Steele replied that he could find "a thousand thousand beauties," but not anything to be called a fault, and added, "I desire you would let me know whether you are at leisure or not. I have a design

[1] This was not published till 1715.



From an engraving by C. Picart after the picture by Sir Peter Lely.

SIR GEORGE BROWN, THE "SIR PLUME" OF "THE RAPE OF THE LOCK."



which I shall open in a month or two hence, with the assistance of a few like yourself."

This design was the founding of a new periodical, *The Guardian*, which, it was hoped, would take the place of *The Spectator*. The request for assistance was a high compliment from an established man of letters like Steele, and Pope eagerly responded: "I shall be very ready and glad to contribute to any design that tends to the advantage of mankind, which, I am sure, all yours do. I wish I had but as much capacity as leisure, for I am perfectly idle —a sign I have not much capacity."

Mr. Caryll's visit to France had been regarded with some suspicion by the authorities, on account of his family connection with the Pretender's Court, and some abusive attacks upon him had appeared in *The Flying Post*. Pope wrote to the younger Caryll to offer his only weapon—his pen—"in reply to, or raillery upon, that scoundrel." But Caryll, or his son for him, declined the offer with decision, and the poet, feeling perhaps that he had made a mistake in suggesting that any notice should be taken of a scurrilous attack, wrote in semi-apologetic vein:

"It was never in my thoughts to offer you my poor pen in any direct reply to such a scoundrel, who, like Hudibras, need fear no blows but such as bruise, but only in some little raillery in the most contemptuous manner thrown upon him, not in your defence expressly, but as in scorn of him *en gaieté de cœur*. But indeed your opinion that it is to be entirely neglected would have been my own at first, had it been my own case; but I felt

some warmth at the first notion, which my reason could not suppress here, as it did when I saw Dennis's book against me, which made me very heartily merry in two minutes' time."[1]

Pope had often declared that his letters were scribbled with all the carelessness and inattention imaginable, and that his style, like his soul, appeared in its natural undress before his friend. There were so many things that he desired to be thought besides a wit—"a Christian, a friend, a frank companion, and a well-natured fellow." After this it is rather a shock to find him applying to Caryll for the return of the whole cargo of these undressed letters. Careless as they were, it appeared that there were some thoughts in them, dashed off in the heat of the moment, which might be of use to him for a design in which he had lately engaged.

Caryll complied with this request, without mentioning the fact that he had taken copies of all the letters. In his acknowledgment Pope remarks: "You have shown me, I must confess, several of my faults in the light of these letters. Upon a review of them, I find many things that would give me shame, if I were not more desirous to be thought honest than prudent. So many things freely thrown out, such lengths of undeserved friendship, thoughts just warm from the brain without any polishing or dress, the very deshabille of the understanding." In spite of Pope's claim to exceptional honesty and candour of speech, Caryll had thought it necessary

[1] In Pope's published correspondence a portion of this letter has been printed as addressed to Addison on July 20, 1713. *The Flying Post* is changed to "John Dennis."

to rebuke his young friend mildly for his tendency to flatter, alluding to certain inflated compliments as "Popish tricks." Pope replied that it would have been more just to call them Catholic tricks, since they were in a manner universal, but promised in the future "to do you as much injustice in my words as you do yourself in your thoughts."

Pope's friendship with "honest Cromwell" came, about this period, to an untimely end. Their quarrel was probably due to some literary cause, for Pope had accused Cromwell of pedantry, and Cromwell had detected Pope in a plagiarism from Voiture. The poet told Gay that he thought Cromwell had been annoyed by "some or other of my freedoms that I very innocently take, and most with those I think my friends."

Gay, with whom the most irascible could never pick a quarrel, had lately been appointed Steward or Secretary to the old Duchess of Monmouth—a post which he owed, as greater men owed their places under Government, to his literary reputation. He wrote to inform Pope of his piece of good fortune, and the poet replied (December 25):

"You are not in the least mistaken when you congratulate me upon your own good success, for I have more people out of whom to be happy than any ill-natured man can boast of. . . . Ourselves are easily provided for; it is nothing but the circumstantials and the apparatus or equipage of human life that cost so much in the furnishing. Only what a luxurious man wants for himself, a good-natured man wants for his friends, or the indigent,"

CHAPTER VIII

1713

"Windsor Forest"—The Production of "Cato"

IN the spring of 1713 Pope brought out his poem, "Windsor Forest," which he had begun, if we may accept his own statement, as early as 1704, and completed in the winter of 1712. Lord Lansdowne had instigated the poet to write the panegyric on the Peace of Utrecht with which the piece concludes, and it was to Lord Lansdowne that the work was dedicated. On January 10, 1713, Pope sent his patron the manuscript to "correct," together with his thanks for giving the poem its greatest ornament—that of bearing his Lordship's name on the first page.

"I am not so vain as to think," he adds, "I have shown you a favour in sparing your modesty, and you cannot but make me some return for prejudicing the truth to gratify you. This, I beg, may be the free correction of these verses, which will have few beauties but what may be made by your blots. I am in the circumstances of an ordinary painter drawing Sir Godfrey Kneller, who by a few touches of his own could make the piece very valuable."[1]

[1] This is only too apt an illustration of Pope's own verses :

> What woeful stuff this madrigal would be
> In some starved hackney sonneteer, or me !
> But let a lord once own the happy lines,
> How the wit brightens ! how the style refines !

Sir William Trumbull asserted that it was he who originally suggested the theme. In a letter to a friend, written shortly after the publication of the poem, the old diplomatist observes, with an evident sense of injury, "I should have commended his [Pope's] poem on Windsor Forest much more if he had not served me a slippery trick; for you must know I had long since put him upon this subject, gave several hints, and at last, when he brought it and read it, and made some little alterations, etc., not one word of putting in my name till I found it in print."

The first part of the work, which was evidently suggested by Sir John Denham's "Cooper's Hill," shows the young poet still in the imitative stage, his descriptions of nature still smelling of the coffee-house, his pages still weighted with the mythological deities whose dreary pretensions Addison had already laughed away in the pages of *The Spectator*.[1]

A descriptive poem is not usually distinguished for the strength of its "fable," and "Windsor Forest" was certainly no exception to the rule. A brief picture of the peace and beauty of the Forest under the beneficent reign of a Stuart is followed by a retrospective glance at the dismal time when, beneath the iron hand of the Conqueror—

> The fields are ravished from th' industrious swains,
> From men their cities, and from gods their fanes;
> The levelled towns with weeds he covered o'er;
> The hollow winds through naked temples roar;

[1] In *The Spectator* for October 30, 1712, Addison ridicules the practice of bringing in the fables of pagan mythology, in other words a parcel of school-boy tales, to illustrate or adorn a modern poem. He concludes by issuing an edict against the custom.

> Round broken columns clasping ivy twined ;
> O'er heaps of ruin stalked the stately hind ;
> The fox obscene to gaping tombs retires,
> And savage howlings fill the sacred choirs.

The historical retrospect is followed by an account of the field-sports appropriate to each season of the year. The poet himself can have taken but a small part in the out-door amusements of the Forest, and a certain portion of his description is based upon similar passages in other authors rather than upon actual observation. His natural tenderness for animals, which he was obliged to conceal from his sporting neighbours, is displayed in the picturesque lines upon the wounded pheasant :

> See ! from the brake the whirring pheasant springs,
> And mounts exultant on triumphant wings :
> Short is his joy : he feels the fiery wound,
> Flutters in blood, and panting beats the ground.
> Ah ! what avail his glossy varying dyes,
> His purple crest, and scarlet circled eyes,
> The vivid green his shining wings unfold,
> His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold ?

After a description of hunting, in which poor gouty Anne is compared to Diana—"As bright a goddess and as chaste a queen"—and of shooting and fishing—fish being distantly alluded to as "the scaly breed"—the poet, mindful of the necessity for some sort of narrative, suddenly plunges into an Ovidian fable. The nymph Lodona, in order to escape from the pursuit of Pan, dissolves into a stream, known to prosaic mortals as the Loddon.

In this work Pope shows the first promise of that genius for poetic compliment in which he excelled

all his fellows, who strained their "hard-bound brains" for flattering odes to noble patrons. A fine and sober tribute is paid to the virtues of good Sir William Trumbull—

> Who to these shades retires,
> Whom nature charms, and whom the Muse inspires.

Trumbull is represented as gathering health from herbs, marking the course of rolling orbs, exalting the "mineral powers" with his chemic art, unlocking the stores of ancient writ, and thus enjoying "successive study, exercise, and ease."

> Such was the life great Scipio once admired,
> Thus Atticus, and Trumbull thus retired.

A chronicle of the poets who had sung in the Forest is spoilt by the absurd panegyric on Lord Lansdowne. Who should charm the shades, the poet inquires, since Fate has silenced the "heavenly voices of Denham and Cowley"? In affected raptures he replies:

> But hark! the groves rejoice, the forest rings!
> Are these revived? Or is it Granville sings?
> 'Tis yours, my lord, to bless our soft retreats
> And call the Muses to their ancient seats;
> To paint anew the flow'ry sylvan scenes,
> To crown the forests with immortal greens,
> Make Windsor-hills in lofty numbers rise,
> And lift her turrets nearer to the skies;
> To sing those honours you deserve to wear,
> And add new lustre to her royal star.

A poetical account is given of the kings and heroes that Windsor bore, and to the wars that involved her "sacred domes in rolling fire." But in the blest moment when great Anna said "Let discord

cease," Father Thames rose up from his oozy bed, and into his mouth is put the famous panegyric on the Peace, from which the following prophecy may be quoted:

> The time shall come when, free as seas or wind,
> Unbounded Thames shall flow for all mankind,
> Whole nations enter with each swelling tide,
> And seas but join the regions they divide;
> Earth's distant ends our glory shall behold,
> And the new world launch forth to seek the old.
> Then ships of uncouth form shall stem the tide,
> And feathered people crowd my wealthy side;
> And naked youths and painted chiefs admire
> Our speech, our colour, and our strange attire.
> Oh! stretch thy reign, fair Peace! from shore to shore,
> Till conquest cease and slavery be no more;
> Till the freed Indians, in their native groves,
> Reap their own fruits and woo their sable loves;
> Peru once more a race of kings behold,
> And other Mexicos be roofed with gold.

To give even a fictitious lustre to the inglorious Peace of Utrecht the inspiration of genius was necessary. The Whigs and Tories appear to have exchanged characters since the days of Anne. Then, the Tories were the Little Englanders, the lovers of peace at any price, economical of their country's glory, willing to rob Marlborough and England of the fruits of victory as long as they could save the tax-payers' pockets, and hang on to power a few years longer. The Opposition regarded the terms of the Peace with mingled rage and humiliation, and Pope's Whig friends entirely disapproved of the sentiments of Father Thames. But it is impossible to believe Spence's story that "Addison was inexpressibly chagrined at the noble conclusion of 'Windsor

Forest,' both as a politician and as a poet—as a politician, because it so highly celebrated that treaty of peace which he deemed so pernicious to the liberties of Europe ; and as a poet, because he was deeply conscious that his own 'Campaign,' that gazette in rhyme, contained no strokes of such genius and sublime poetry.''

Few men have been more free from such pettiness than Addison. He showed how deep was his chagrin by inviting Pope to write the Prologue to *Cato*, which was performed on April 14 of this year. The young poet, who was quite shrewd enough to perceive the wisdom of being all things to all parties, readily undertook to write the Prologue to a tragedy that was put forth at the desire of the Opposition. It was hoped that this episode from Roman history would be accepted by the nation as a warning of what they might expect at the hands of an arbitrary Government.

Pope spent the early months of 1713 in London, studying painting under his friend Jervas.[1] He had been worried by the squabbles that raged round Mrs. Weston and her matrimonial affairs, and was evidently glad to escape from the neighbourhood of the Forest till the storm had blown over. That he had suffered the common fate of those who interfere in family squabbles may be gathered from

[1] Charles Jervas, the portrait-painter (*c.* 1675–1739). He was a pupil of Kneller's, and apparently almost as vain as his master. He painted many of the beautiful women of his time, and a number of literary men, including Pope, Swift, Arbuthnot, and Newton. He was supposed to be in love with the Duke of Marlborough's daughter, Lady Bridgewater. Jervas made a translation of "Don Quixote," which ran through many editions.

a letter in which he complains, with a touch of bitterness: "It is a common practice now for ladies to contract friendships as the great folks in ancient times entered into leagues. They sacrificed a poor animal between them, and commenced inviolable allies *ipso facto.* So now they pull some harmless little creature into pieces, and worry his character together very comfortably. Mrs. Nelson and Mrs. Englefield have served me just thus, the former of whom has done me all the ill offices that lay in her way, particularly with Mrs. W[eston], and at Whiteknights."

At twenty-five Pope found himself the most fashionable poet of his day. Society opened its doors to him, and persons of quality thought themselves honoured by his friendship. At the clubs and coffee-houses he had taken his place among the reigning wits, and even at Button's Addison was not secure of his supremacy. Swift, now engaged in pouring out his pugnacious pamphlets and bullying his "Brothers" in the Court and Cabinet, was one of Pope's most ardent admirers. In his "Journal to Stella" he noted that Mr. Pope had written a very fine poem called "Windsor Forest," and Stella was commanded to read it. A little later he was to use his powerful influence, in the most practical manner, for the advantage of his new friend.

Dennis alone raised a discordant note, but then, to be damned by Dennis was rather a distinction than otherwise. "'Windsor Forest,'" wrote the critic in a published letter, "is a wretched rhapsody not worthy the observation of a man of sense." Half the poem, he declared, had nothing in it that

was peculiar to the Forest; the objects were for the most part trifling, such as hunting, fishing, etc., and the author was "obscure, ambiguous, affected, temerarious, and barbarous."

Having agreed to furnish the Prologue to *Cato*, Pope was allowed to read the tragedy in manuscript. "It drew tears from me in several parts of the fourth and fifth acts," he told Caryll, "where the beauty of virtue appears so charming that I believe, if it comes upon the theatre, we shall enjoy that which Plato thought the greatest pleasure an exalted soul could be capable of—a view of virtue itself drest in person, colour, and action. The emotion which the mind will feel from this character, and the sentiments of humanity which the distress of such a person as Cato will stir up in us, must necessarily fill an audience with so glorious a disposition and sovereign a love of virtue that I question if any play has ever conduced so immediately to morals as this."

This account of the play is curiously inconsistent with Pope's report (to Spence) of a conversation he had with the author. Addison, he says, asked him for his candid opinion of the piece, and, after studying it for three or four days, "I gave him my sincere opinion, which was, that I thought he had better not act it, and that he would get reputation enough by only printing it. This I said, as thinking the lines well written, but the piece not theatrical enough." Addison does not appear to have resented this advice, though, fortunately for himself, he neglected to follow it. He explained that some intimate friends, whom he could not disoblige, had insisted on its being performed. He was ready,

however, to alter anything that might seem amiss, and Pope declared, "I believe he did not leave a single word unchanged that I made any scruple against."

The tragedy was produced on April 13, and Pope has left a vivid account of its reception, from which it appears that he had no desire to belittle his friend's success.

"Cato was not so much the wonder of Rome in his days," he wrote to Caryll, "as he is of Britain in ours, and, though all the foolish industry possible has been used to make it a party play, yet what the author once said of another may be the most properly in the world applied to him on this occasion :

> Envy itself is dumb, in wonder lost,
> And factions strive who shall applaud him most.[1]

"The numerous and violent claps of the Whig party on the one side the theatre were echoed back by the Tories on the other, while the author sweated behind the scenes with concern to find their applause proceeded more from the hand than from the head. This was the case, too, of the Prologue-writer, who was clapped into a staunch Whig, sore against his will, at almost every two lines. I believe you have heard that, after all the applause of the opposite faction, my Lord Bolingbroke sent for Booth, who played Cato, into the box, between one of the acts, and presented him with fifty guineas, in acknowledgment, as he expressed it, for his defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator. The

[1] From "The Campaign."

Whigs are unwilling to be distanced this way, as it is said, and therefore design a present to the said Cato very speedily. In the meantime they are getting ready as good a sentence as the former on their side. So betwixt them it is probable that Cato, as Dr. Garth expressed it, may have something to live upon after he dies."

A curious contemporary allusion to the performance is to be found in a letter from Dr. Berkeley, the future Bishop of Cloyne, to Mr. Percival, which is preserved among Lord Egmont's manuscripts.[1] "I was present," he writes, "with Mr. Addison and two or three more friends in a side-box, where we had a table and two or three flasks of Burgundy and champagne, with which the author (who is a very sober man) thought it necessary to support his spirits; . . . and indeed it was a pleasant refreshment to us all between the acts. Some parts of the Prologue, written by Mr. Pope, a Tory and even a Papist, were hissed, being thought to savour of Whiggism, but the clap got much the better of the hiss. Lord Harley, who sat in the next box to us, was observed to clap as loud as any in the house all the time of the play."

[1] Historical MSS. Commission. Appendix to 7th Report.

CHAPTER IX

1713

Articles in "The Guardian"—"The Narrative of Dr. Norris"

IN the spring of 1713 a series of papers on "Pastoral Poetry" appeared in the newly started *Guardian*. In these papers, which were generally attributed to Tickell, Ambrose Philips's "Pastorals" were highly praised, while Pope's were passed over in silence. The writer went so far as to say that there had been only four masters of the pastoral art in two thousand years—"Theocritus, who left his dominions to Virgil; Virgil, who left his to his son Spenser; and Spenser, who was succeeded by his eldest-born, Philips." A shot at Pope was evidently intended in the commendation given to Philips for introducing English fairies into English eclogues, instead of the gods and goddesses of a creed outworn.

Pope, whose natural vanity had been inflamed by his early success, revenged himself, in characteristic fashion, for the contemptuous neglect with which his own work had been treated. He sent an anonymous paper to *The Guardian*, in which he dealt out ironical praise to Philips and ironical blame to him-

self. It is commonly supposed that Steele did not trouble himself to read the paper, or else that he glanced through it hurriedly without perceiving its drift. It is possible, however, that he saw the joke, and was prepared to enjoy it.[1] Be that as it may, the article was printed, and seems to have deceived many of the elect, though not the victim of the sarcasm. It must be confessed that Pope conducted his attack in a most unsportsmanlike style, picking out some of Philips's worst lines as average specimens of his style, and ridiculing him for errors of taste which he—Pope—had also committed.[2] The whole paper is permeated with indirect praise of his own "Pastorals," conveyed in terms of blame which recoiled on his own head, for the condemnation was taken literally by matter-of-fact readers.

Pope alludes to himself as "that gentleman whose character it is that he takes the greatest care of his works before they are published, and has the least concern for them afterwards." Mr. Pope, he explained, had fallen into the same error as Virgil, for his clowns did not converse in all the simplicity proper to the country. "He introduces Alexis and Thyrsis on British plains, as Virgil had done before him on the Mantuan; whereas Philips, who hath the strictest regard to propriety, makes choice of names

[1] It is said that Steele showed the article to Pope, declaring that he would never publish any paper in which one member of the club was complimented at the expense of another. Pope, professing to be magnanimously indifferent to the blame, insisted that the paper should be published.

[2] For example, making spring and autumn flowers bloom at the same time, introducing animals that were not native to England, and writing mechanical imitations of the ancients.

peculiar to the country, such as Hobbinol, Lobbin, Cuddy and Colin Clout."

After comparing some of Philips's lines with his own rendering of similar subjects,[1] the satirist concludes: "After all that hath been said, I hope none can think it an injustice to Mr. Pope that I forebore to mention him as a pastoral writer, since, upon the whole, he is of the same class with Moschus and Bion, whom we have excluded that rank; and of whose eclogues, as well as some of Virgil's, it may be said that (according to the description we have given of this sort of poetry) they are by no means pastorals, but something better."

There is a tradition that Philips, having seen through the irony of the paper on pastoral poetry, hung up a rod at Button's, and threatened to use it on his fellow-Arcadian, should he ever show his face there again. Cibber, in his "Letter to Mr. Pope," published thirty years later, alludes to this incident and to the conduct that had provoked it. "When you used to pass your hours at Button's," he reminds the poet, "you were even there remarkable for your satirical itch of provocation. Scarce was there a gentleman of any pretension to wit whom

[1] The difference is not so enormous. For example, one of Philips's shepherds sings:

> As I to cool me bathed one sultry day,
> Fond Lydia lurking in the sedges lay.
> The wanton laughed, and seemed in haste to fly,
> Yet often stopped and often turned her eye.

Pope's Strephon is equally *fade* when he warbles:

> Me gentle Delia beckons from the plains,
> Then, hid in shades, eludes her eager swains;
> But feigns a laugh to see me search around,
> And by that laugh the willing fair is found.

your unguarded temper had not fallen upon in some biting epigram; amongst which you once caught a pastoral Tartar, whose resentment, that your punishment might be proportioned to the smart of your poetry, had stuck up a birchen rod in the room, to be ready whenever you might come within reach of it; and at this rate you writ and rallied and writ on, till you rhymed yourself quite out of the coffee-house."

Another paper, contributed by Pope to *The Guardian* (May 21, 1713), was on a less contentious subject, namely, the treatment of animals. In those days the crime of cruelty to animals could hardly be said to exist, since no suffering that man thought fit to inflict on the dumb beasts that had been created for his own use—or abuse—was considered cruel. The average reader, therefore, must have found something startlingly heterodox in the remark: "I cannot think it extravagant to imagine that mankind are no less, in proportion, accountable for their ill-use over creatures of the lower rank of being than for the exercise of their tyranny over their own species." Montaigne had said that few people take delight in seeing beasts caress or play together, but almost every one is pleased to see them lacerate and worry one another. "I am sorry," comments Pope, "that this temper is become almost a distinguishing character of our own nation, from the observation that is made by foreigners of our beloved pastimes—bear-baiting, cock-fighting, and the like." Even more barbarous than our sports, however, was our gluttony. Lobsters roasted alive, pigs whipped to death, fowls sewed up, were testimonies of the prevailing

outrageous luxury. "Those who divide their time betwixt an anxious conscience and a nauseated stomach have a just reward of their gluttony in the diseases it brings with it; for human savages, like other wild beasts, find snares and poison in the provisions of life, and are allured by their appetite to their destruction. I know nothing more shocking and horrid than the prospect of one of their kitchens covered with blood, and filled with cries of creatures expiring in tortures."

We have seen how one "Popish trick" was played on a rival in the spring of this year, and only a few months later another was perpetrated on a hostile critic. Dennis had published some "Remarks on *Cato*," which, like most of his criticisms, consisted chiefly of virulent abuse. Pope at once took up the cudgels, ostensibly on behalf of Addison, but actually on behalf of himself and his "Essay on Criticism." He brought out a scurrilous pamphlet called "The Narrative of Dr. Robert Norris concerning the strange and deplorable frenzy of Mr. John Dennis, an officer of the Custom-house." This attack, like the majority of Pope's prose satires, was as dull as Dennis's criticisms, and a good deal dirtier. Pope, observes Macaulay, could dissect a character in terse, sonorous couplets, brilliant with antithesis, but of dramatic talent he was altogether destitute. "If he had written a lampoon on Dennis, such as that on Atticus, the old critic would have been crushed for ever. But Pope writing dialogue resembled—to borrow Horace's imagery and his own—a wolf which, instead of biting, should take to kicking, or a monkey which should try to sting. The Narrative

is utterly contemptible. Of argument there is not even the show; and the jests are such as, if they were introduced into a farce, would call forth the hisses of the shilling gallery."

Norris was a well-known quack physician, and in the Narrative an old woman comes to the doctor's house to call him to her master, Mr. Dennis, who is raving aloud, and muttering the word Cator, or Cato. "Now, doctor," says the messenger, "this Cato is certainly a witch, and my master is under an evil tongue, for I have heard him say that Cato has bewitched the whole nation."

Norris goes to Dennis's lodgings, and finds him in a room hung with old tapestry, which had several holes in it, caused by his having cut out of it the heads of divers tyrants, the fierceness of whose visages had much provoked him.[1] "On all sides of his room," relates Norris, "were pinned a great many sheets of a tragedy called *Cato*, with notes on the margin in his own hand. The words 'absurd,' 'monstrous,' 'execrable,' were everywhere written in such large characters that I could read them without my spectacles."

Lintot and a grave, middle-aged gentleman (probably intended for Cromwell) are sitting by the patient's bedside, and, after Dennis has raved against *Cato*, declaring that he is sick of the sentiments, of the diction, of the protasis, of the epitasis, and the catastrophe, Lintot gives the following account of

[1] An allusion to the lines on Appius in "The Essay on Criticism":

> But Appius reddens at each word you speak,
> And stares tremendous with a threat'ning eye,
> Like some fierce tyrant in old tapestry.

the fashion in which the critic was first attacked by his malady :

"That on the 17th of May, 1712, between the hours of ten and eleven in the morning, Mr. John Dennis entered his shop, and, opening one of the volumes of *The Spectator* in large paper, did suddenly, without the least provocation, tear out that of No. — [40], where the author treats of poetical justice,[1] and cast it into the street. That the said Mr. John Dennis, on the 27th of March, 1712, finding on the said Mr. Lintot's counter a book called an 'Essay on Criticism,' just then published, he read a page or two with much frowning, till, coming to these lines:

> Some have at first for wits, then poets passed,
> Turned critics next, and proved plain fools at last,

he flung down the book in a terrible fury, and cried, 'By God, he means me!'"

But the reader will probably have had enough, though only the more "polite" parts of the satire have been quoted. It was small wonder that Addison repudiated any share in the Narrative. He caused Steele[2] to write the following dignified rebuke to Lintot, who had published the pamphlet :

"Mr. Addison desired me to tell you he wholly disapproves the manner of treating Mr. Dennis in a little pamphlet by way of Dr. Norris's account.

[1] In his critical pamphlets Dennis had published his adherence to the theory of "poetical justice," which was ridiculed in *The Spectator*.

[2] Mr. Dilke held the theory that Steele himself wrote the Narrative. Pope denied the authorship to Caryll, but such denials were only a figure of speech. Dennis had no doubt that the lampoon was by Pope, and it strongly resembles his other prose satires.

When he thinks fit to take notice of Mr. Dennis's objections to his writings, he will do it in a way Mr Dennis shall have no just reason to complain of; but when the papers above mentioned were offered to be communicated to him, he said he could not, either in honour or conscience, be privy to such a treatment, and was sorry to hear of it."

By this time Pope, having made Button's too hot to hold him, was eager to form a rival literary club, in which there should be no Cato to "give his little senate laws." The atmosphere of Button's was probably too Whiggish to please the wits of the opposite camp, now that party feeling was running high. The Scriblerus Club was started in the course of this year, its chief supporters being Swift, Pope, Arbuthnot,[1] and Gay, while the members numbered such distinguished names as Congreve, Atterbury, and Parnell.[2] Even the Lord Treasurer would sometimes steal away from the cares of State to join the meetings of the Scriblerus, where he played the part of a lord among wits, a rôle which suited him much better than that of a wit among lords.

The Scriblerus does not appear to have developed

[1] Dr. John Arbuthnot (1667–1735), the witty Scotchman who was appointed Physician Extraordinary to Queen Anne in 1705. He wrote the "History of John Bull," "The Art of Political Lying," and other skits. He took little pains to preserve his writings, but allowed his children to make kites of his papers. Swift said, "The doctor has more humanity than we all have, and his humanity is equal to his wit."

[2] Thomas Parnell, the Irish poet (1679-1718). He contributed some papers to *The Spectator* and *The Guardian*. His best-known poems are "The Hermit" and "The Fairy Tale." He was a minor Canon of Dublin Cathedral, and became Vicar of Finglas in 1716.

into a social or party club on the usual lines, with a local habitation and regular meetings. It was rather a society of literary men, all intimate friends, who met informally to discuss projects for skits and *jeux d'esprit* which were to bring confusion upon their natural enemies—hack-writers and hostile critics. A grand scheme was planned for a comprehensive satire in prose upon follies and abuses in every branch of science, comprised in the history of the life and writings of Martinus Scriblerus, which was to be undertaken by Swift, Pope, and Arbuthnot, with assistance from other members. The club broke up, however, or was dispersed, amid the agitations and excitements of the year 1715, when Tory societies were regarded with a just suspicion. The great schemes ended in some brilliant fragments, a scrap-heap of wit which contained the germs of at least two immortal works—"Gulliver's Travels" and "The Dunciad."[1]

Pope spent the summer, as usual, between Binfield and London. While in town he studied painting with Jervas in the mornings, and spent the evenings in the conversation of such friends as he thought most likely to improve his mind, irrespective of party or denomination. In a rather grandiloquent account of his coffee-house society, evidently intended to impress the "country wits" of Caryll,[2] he says :

"This minute, perhaps, I am above the stars,

[1] The idea for Pope's organ, *The Grub Street Journal*, was probably suggested by a proposed Scriblerus satire, which was to treat of the "Works of the Unlearned" in terms of ironical praise.

[2] In the edition of the correspondence published in 1735, this letter is addressed to Addison.

with a thousand systems round about me, looking forward into the vast abyss of eternity, and losing my whole comprehension in the boundless spaces of the extended creation, in dialogues with Whiston and the astronomers; the next moment I am below all trifles, even grovelling with T[idcombe][1] in the very centre of nonsense. Now am I recreating my mind with the brisk sallies and quick turns of wit which Mr. Steele, in his liveliest and freest humours, darts about him; and now levelling apprehension to the insignificant observations and quirks of grammar of Mr. C[romwell] and D[ennis]."

His study of painting, however unsuccessful may have been the results, was teaching him discoveries that hitherto had been imperceptible to him. Every corner of an eye, or turn of an ear, the smallest degree of light or shade in cheek or a dimple, now had powers to distract him. Every day, he complained to Gay, the performances of others appeared more excellent and his own more despicable.

"I have thrown away three Dr. Swifts, each of whom was once my vanity, two Lady Bridgewaters, a Duchess of Montagu, besides half-a-dozen earls and one knight of the garter. I have crucified Christ over again in effigy, and made a Madonna as old as her mother, St. Anne. Nay, what is more miraculous,

[1] Tidcombe was a friend of Cromwell, a frequenter of Will's, and apparently a butt of the wits. Pope often alludes to him, always in a tone of friendly contempt. In one letter to Cromwell, he says: "I would as soon write like Durfey as live like Tidcombe, whose beastly, laughable life is at once nasty and diverting." For a time Tidcombe seems to have been expelled from Will's, but later was restored, to the great joy of Cromwell, "who was at a great loss for a person to converse with upon the Fathers and church history."

I have rivalled St. Luke himself in painting, and, as it is said an angel came and finished his piece, so you would swear a devil put the last hand to mine, it is so begrimed and smutted. However, I comfort myself with a Christian reflection that I have not broken the commandment, for my pictures are not the likeness of anything in heaven above, or in the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. Neither will anybody adore or worship them, except the Indians should have a sight of them, who, they tell us, worship certain pagods or idols purely for their ugliness."

CHAPTER X

1713

Proposals for the Translation of the "Iliad"

THE study of painting was the ostensible, but not the actual, purpose of Pope's frequent visits to London during the summer of 1713. He was preparing the ground for an important undertaking which, he hoped, would reward him with both fame and fortune. Though his works had already brought him a great reputation, he had earned very little hard cash. From Lintot's account-book it appears that Pope had received £32 5*s.* for "Windsor Forest," £7 for the first version of "The Rape of the Lock," £16 2*s.* 6*d.* for translations from Statius, and £3 16*s.* 6*d.* for the three pieces in Lintot's "Miscellany." How much he received for the "Pastorals" or for the first edition of the "Essay on Criticism" is not known, but for a new edition of the Essay which was published in 1716, when his reputation was established, Lintot only paid £15. If Pope had ever seriously thought of earning a living by his brush, he was now convinced of the impracticability of that plan. Though he could depend on free quarters at Binfield, he needed an independent income such as would enable him to buy books, to move about freely, and to hold his

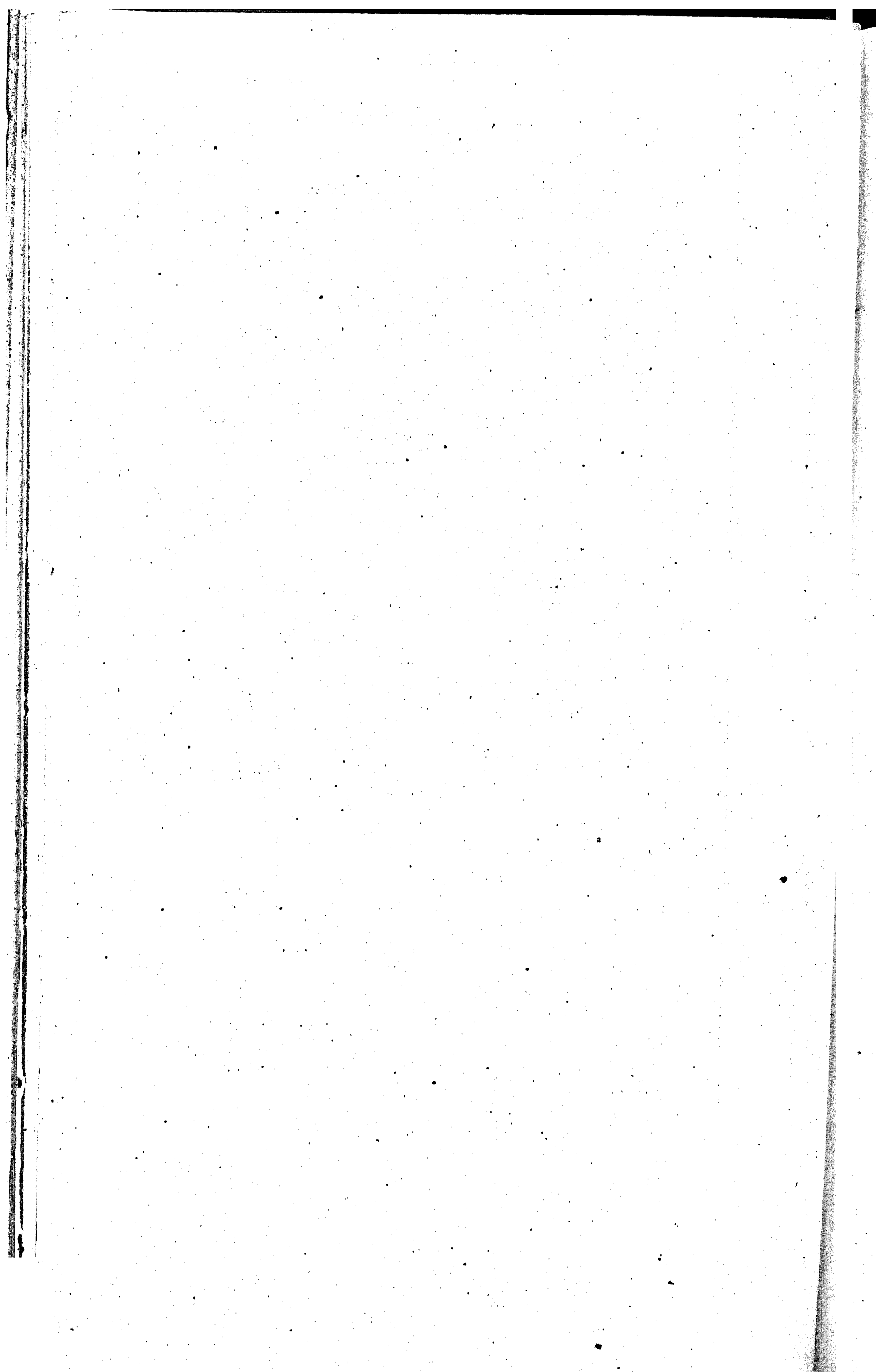
own among his friends in town. Moreover, his state of health rendered it necessary that he should keep a horse, have medical attendance, and pay occasional visits to the Bath.

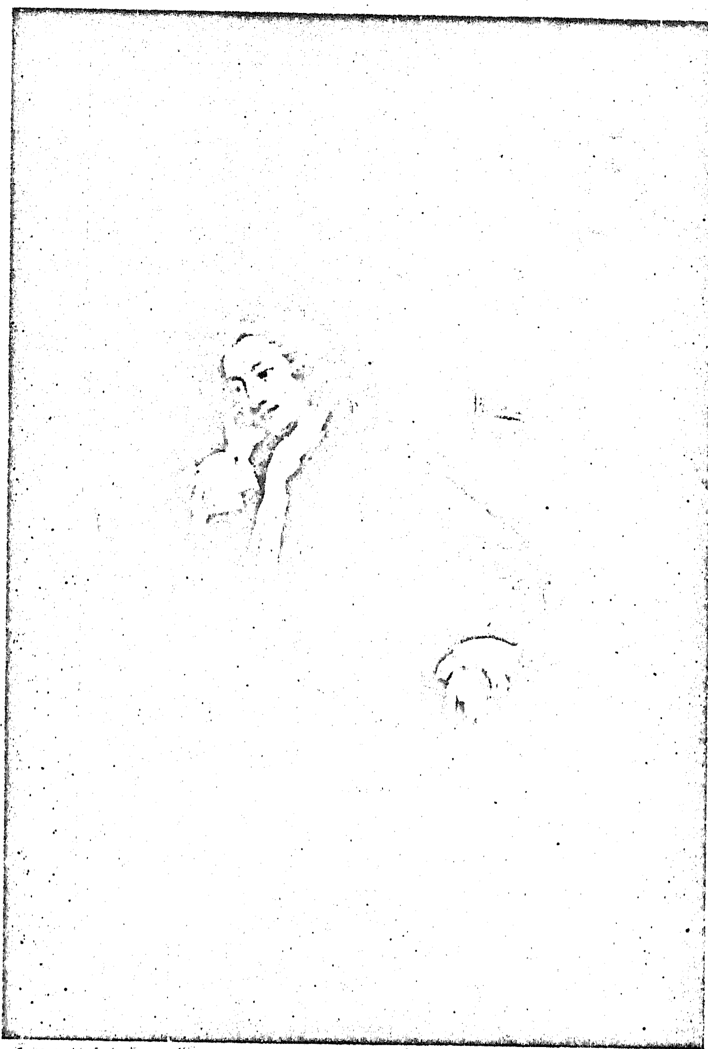
The young man had already proved that it was impossible to live by writing original poetry, and he probably realised that, apart from "the Rape of the Lock," his best work was to be found in his imitations and translations. As early as 1708 Sir William Trumbull, after reading Pope's version of the episode of Sarpedon, had urged him to proceed in translating Homer, "to make him speak good English, to dress his admirable characters in your proper significant and expressive conception, and to make his works as useful and instructive to this degenerate age as he was to our friend Horace."

At this time the translations of the classics were regarded as safer and more profitable speculations by the booksellers than original poetry, and now that Chapman's version of Homer was considered uncouth and barbarous, while the renderings of Hobbes[1] and Ogilby[2] were found dull and prosaic, there seemed a good opening for a new translation of the "Iliad." During the months that Pope spent in London he was doubtless feeling the pulse of the patrons, the public, and the booksellers. He had now made a number of powerful friends in the Ministerial party, and as long as an author could

[1] The philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, finished his translation of Homer about 1674, when he was eighty-six years of age.

[2] John Ogilby (1600–1676) began life as a dancing-master. He was afterwards Master of the Revels in Ireland. Later he set up a printing press in London, and published his verse-translation of Homer in about 1660.





From a photo by Emery Walker after the picture in the National Portrait Gallery by Charles Jervas.

Alexander Pope
with (presumably) Martha Blount.

depend on influential support, publication by subscription was held to be the best means of obtaining large profits. Pope adopted this method, and his proposals for a new translation of the "Iliad," with introduction, notes, and maps, issued in October, 1713, met with a ready response. Tonson had made an offer for the work, but he had been outbid by Bernard Lintot, who agreed to pay £200 for each volume and to supply sets to subscribers free of charge. As there were six volumes at a guinea each, and as the poet was able to secure nearly six hundred subscribers, many of whom took several sets, it will be understood that his profits amounted to a very considerable sum![1] Pope was not a Greek scholar, nor did he possess the special critical learning that nowadays would be considered essential to any man who proposed to translate and annotate Homer. But in the easy-going days of Queen Anne ignorance of Greek was not regarded as any serious impediment to the carrying out of such a gigantic task. There were accurate translations of the "Iliad" in Latin, French and English which could be consulted for the "sense," notes could be borrowed, with, or without acknowledgment from dry-as-dust commentators, and some sound "Grecian" could be found to supply the Introduction. Few persons ventured to doubt that Homer, like Isaiah, would appear "to advantage dressed" in the flowing robes of Pope's heroic verse.

The poet's friends canvassed industriously for subscriptions. It could not have been easy to

[1] It is reckoned that he cleared from the "Iliad" alone between £5,000 and £6,000. But he spent six years on the work.

persuade people, who knew nothing of the author, to invest in a six-guinea translation of the "Iliad," but Caryll obtained no fewer than thirty-eight subscribers, and Swift used his then almost unbounded influence with his own party. Bishop Kennet[1] notes in his Diary for November 2, 1713:

"Dr. Swift came into the coffee-house and had a bow from everybody but me, who, I confess, could not but despise him. When I came into the anti-chamber to wait, before prayers, Dr. Swift was the principal man of talk and business, and acted as master of requests. Then he instructed a young nobleman that the *best poet in England* was Mr. Pope (a Papist), who had begun a translation of Homer into English verse, for which *he must have them all subscribe;* for, says he, the author shall not begin to print till I have a thousand guineas for him."

In October Lord Lansdowne wrote to assure Pope of his satisfaction at the proposed design of translating Homer. "The trials which you have already made and published on some parts of that author," he remarks, "have shown that you are equal to so great a task; and you may therefore depend on the utmost services I can do you in promoting that work, or anything that may be for your service." "Granville the polite" could scarcely say less after the extravagant compliments that had been paid him in "Windsor Forest."

[1] White Kennet (1660–1728). At this time he was Chaplain-in-Ordinary to the Queen, and Dean of Peterborough. Later he was made Bishop of Peterborough. He published a "Complete History of England," and was one of the original members of the S.P.G.

Addison, too, if we may accept as more or less genuine the letters published under his name in Pope's correspondence,[1] expressed his willingness to help with the canvassing,[2] and adds: "As I have an ambition of having it known you are my friend, I shall be very proud of showing it by this, or any other instance. I question not that your translation will enrich our tongue, and do honour to our country. . . . This work would cost you a great deal of time, and, unless you undertake it, will, I am afraid, never be executed by any other; at least I know none of this age that is equal to it besides yourself." Pope may have been alluding to this, or some other letter in the same cordial vein, when he states in the Preface to the "Iliad" that "Mr. Addison was the first whose advice determined me to undertake the task, who was pleased to write to me on that occasion in such terms as I cannot repeat without vanity."

It was natural that at this juncture Pope should be exceedingly anxious to stand well with the representatives of all shades of opinion, both religious and political, since to offend any one clan or sect involved the loss of possible subscribers. He had been concerned at finding that his Catholic friends, from whom he looked for the staunchest support, were offended by his praise of Erasmus and his condemnation of the monks in the "Essay on Criticism." "As to my writings," he observes, "I

[1] The letters printed as from Addison to Pope may possibly have been genuine, but those printed as from Pope to Addison are made up out of letters to Caryll.

[2] Pope said that Addison never got him a single subscriber.

pray to God they may never have other enemies than those they have yet met with—which are first, priests; secondly, women, who are the fools of priests; and thirdly, beaux and fops, who are the fools of women."

The difficulty of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds is exemplified by the fact that Pope got into trouble with some of his Tory friends for writing articles in the Whig *Guardian*. "An honest Jacobite," he says, in another place, "spoke to me the sense, or nonsense, of the weak part of his party very fairly—that the good people took it ill of me that I writ with Steele, though upon never so indifferent subjects. This I know you will laugh at, as well as I do. Yet I doubt not many little calumniators and persons of sour dispositions will take occasion hence to bespatter me. I confess I scorn narrow souls of all parties; and if I renounce my reason in religious matters, I will hardly do it in any other."

In December Pope was back at Binfield, hard at work upon his enlarged version of "The Rape of the Lock," which he desired to finish before he began his translation. That the task he had undertaken was an Homeric one in every sense, he was soon to realise, and he confesses that he trembled at the thought of it. A disappointment in the subscription would not, he declared, cause him any great mortification, considering how much of life he was to sacrifice if it succeeded. Long afterwards he told Spence that "In the beginning of my translating the 'Iliad,' I wished anybody would hang me a hundred times. It sat so heavily on my mind at first that I

often used to dream of it, and do sometimes still. When I fell into the method of translating thirty or forty verses before I got up, and piddled with it the rest of the morning, it went on easy enough; and when I was thoroughly got into the way of it I did the rest with pleasure."

In the spring of 1713 Swift had at last received promotion from his ministerial friends, though not of the kind his soul craved. The Deanery of St. Patrick seemed a poor return for services that the fattest bishopric in England would hardly have repaid. He had gone over to Dublin to be instituted in the summer, but was soon recalled in the hope that he might keep the peace between "the Dragon" and "the Captain," as Oxford and Bolingbroke were nicknamed. The first published letter from Pope to Swift is dated from Binfield, December 8, 1713, and is chiefly remarkable for the "painful" quality of its wit. The poet begins by alluding to Swift's jesting proposal to give him twenty guineas to change his religion. He professes to think that it would be better worth his while to propose a change of faith by subscription than a translation of Homer, and adds, "If you can move every man in the Government who has above ten thousand pounds a year to subscribe as much as yourself I shall become a convert, as most men do when the Lord turns it to their interest."

There is one article, however, he must reserve, namely, prayers for the dead, and this will be an expensive item, since the souls he is most concerned for are those of poets, painters, or heretics. For example, there is Mr. Jervas, who has grievously

offended in making the likeness of almost all things in heaven above and the earth beneath; and Mr. Gay, an unhappy youth who writes pastorals[1] during the time of divine service, and whose case is the more deplorable as he has miserably lavished away all the silver he should have reserved for his soul's health in buttons and loops for his coat. And lastly, there is Dr. Swift, a clergyman who, by his own confession, has composed more libels than sermons. If too much wit is dangerous to salvation, he must certainly be damned to all eternity; but it is to be hoped that his frequent conversations with great men will cause him to have less and less wit every day! In conclusion, Pope confesses his many obligations to the dean, who "has brought me into better company than I cared for, made me merrier when I was sick than I had a mind to be, and put me upon making poems on purpose that he might correct them."

[1] "The Shepherds' Week," which was intended as a burlesque of Philips's "Pastorals."

CHAPTER XI

1714

"The Rape of the Lock"

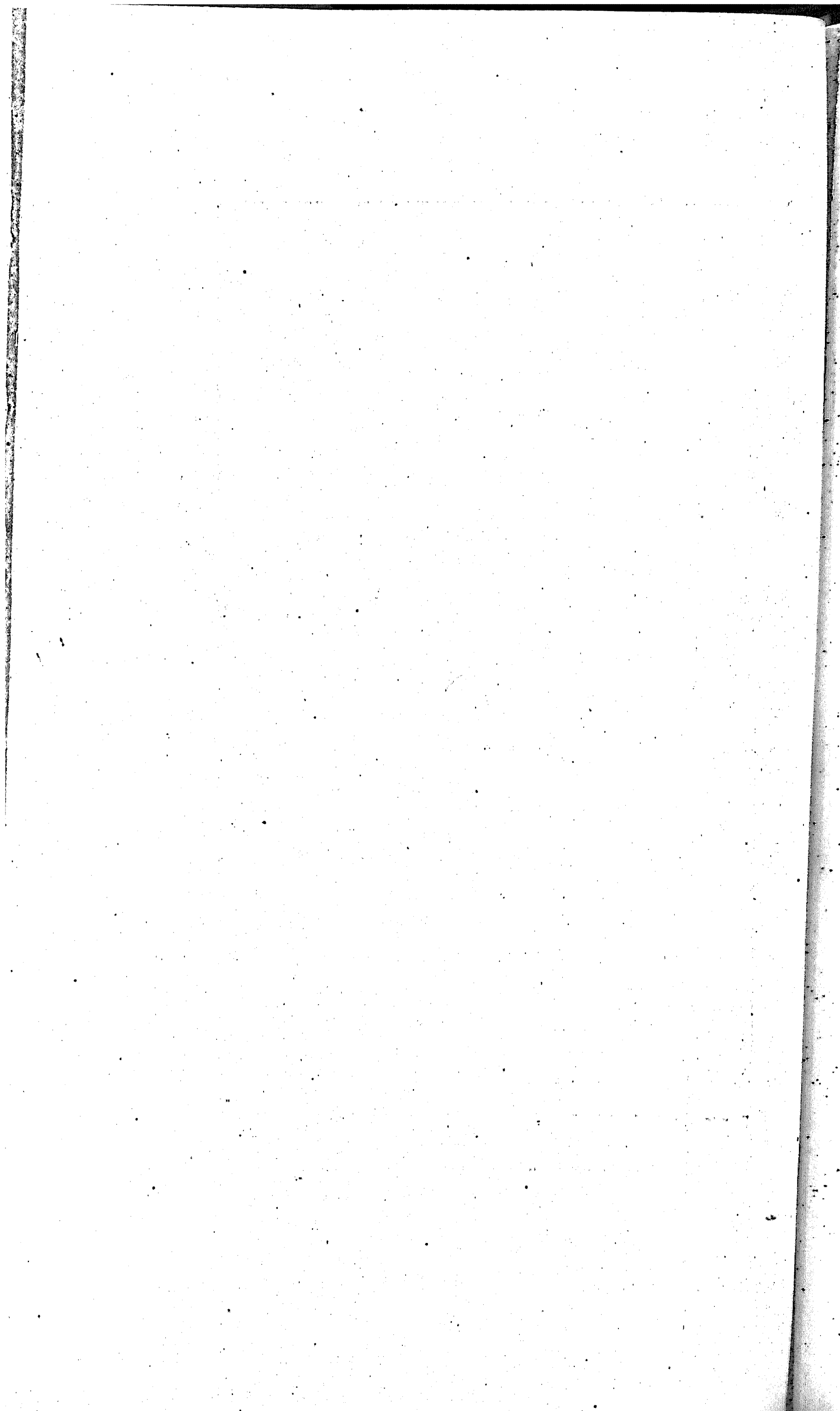
THE completed version of "The Rape of the Lock," an "Heroi-comical" poem in five cantos, with the Rosicrucian "machinery," was published on March 2, 1714. Pope, aware that Miss Fermor had been annoyed by the publication of the original sketch, wrote a flattering dedication to the offended beauty. "I believe," he remarks, "I have managed the dedication so nicely that it can neither hurt the lady nor the author. I writ it very lately, and upon great deliberation. The young lady approves of it, and the best advice in the kingdom of men of sense has been made use of in it, even to the Treasurer's. . . . Not but that, after all, fools will talk, and fools will hear them."

In the dedication it is explained that this piece was intended only to divert "a few young ladies, who have good sense and good humour enough to laugh, not only at their sex's little unguarded follies, but at their own. But as it was communicated with the air of a secret, it soon found its way into the world. An imperfect copy having been offered to a bookseller, you had the good nature, for my

sake, to consent to the publication of one more correct. This I was forced to do, before I had executed half my design, for the machinery was entirely wanting to complete it." The "machinery," the writer proceeds, is a term invented by the critics to signify that part which the deities, angels or demons are made to act in a poem. These machines he had determined to raise on a very new and odd foundation, the Rosicrucian doctrine of spirits. He is aware how disagreeable it is to make use of hard words before a lady, and he must take leave to explain two or three difficult terms.[1]

"The Rosicrucians are a people I must bring you acquainted with. The best account I know of them is in a French book called *Le Comte de Gabalis*, which both in its title and size is so like a novel that many of the fair sex have read it for one by mistake. According to these gentlemen, the four elements are inhabited by spirits which they call sylphs, gnomes, nymphs, and salamanders. The gnomes, or demons of earth, delight in mischief; but the sylphs, whose habitation is in the air, are the best-conditioned creatures imaginable. For, they say, any mortal may enjoy the most intimate familiarities with these gentle spirits upon a condition very easy to all true adepts, an inviolable preservation of chastity. As to the following cantos, all the passages of them are as fabulous as the vision at the beginning, or the transformation at the end,

[1] Pope's offensively patronising tone is evidently quite unconscious. Yet any girl of average intelligence could surely have understood the Rosicrucian fairy-tales without an elaborate explanation.





From an engraving by C. Du Bosc after a painting by L. Du Guernier.

"THE RAPE OF THE LOCK," CANTO I.

From the second edition of the poem, 1714.

except the loss of your hair, which I always mention with reverence. The human personages are as fictitious as the airy ones, and the character of Belinda, as it is now managed, resembles you in nothing but beauty."

The first scene is laid in the bedroom of Belinda, who at midday "still her downy pillow pressed." A morning dream brings her a vision of a youth who whispers in her ear an account of the unnumbered spirits that surround her, the sylphs, salamanders, gnomes, and all the "light militia of the lower sky." The duty of the sylphs is to guard the purity of melting maids, and to expel old impertinence by new. For example:

> What tender maid but must a victim fall
> To one man's treat but for another's ball?
> When Florio speaks what virgin could withstand,
> If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand?
> With varying vanities from every part,
> They shift the moving toyshop of their heart;
> Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive,
> Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.

The dream-youth reveals himself as Ariel, who acts as Belinda's special guardian, and he comes to warn her of some dread event, which is then impending. She is to beware of all, but most beware of man. At this point Belinda is wakened from her dream by Shock, her lap-dog, and the rites of the toilette begin the serious business of her day. Her attendant, Mistress Betty, assisted by the invisible sylphs, arranges her altar, the dressing-table, where the various offerings of the world appear, and decks the goddess with the glittering spoil.

> This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
> And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.
> The tortoise here and elephant unite,
> Transformed to combs, the speckled and the white.
> Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
> Puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, *billets-doux*.
> Now awful beauty puts on all its arms;
> The fair each moment rises in her charms,
> Repairs her smiles,[1] awakens every grace,
> And calls forth all the wonders of her face.

In Canto II. we find Belinda "launched on the silver bosom of the Thames"—in plain prose, she has set forth upon a water-party to Hampton Court. Though she is surrounded by fair nymphs and well-dressed youths, every eye is fixed on her alone.

> Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
> And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.
> Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
> Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide.
> If to her share some female errors fall,
> Look on her face and you'll forget them all.

Chief among her attractions were two locks which hung on her ivory neck in equal curls. The poet, moralising on the irresistible power of these "slender chains," points out that—

> With hairy springes we the birds betray,
> Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,[2]
> Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,
> And beauty draws us with a single hair.[3]

[1] "Repairs her smiles" is not a happy expression. It suggests an artificial and immovable grimace.

[2] Pope had an insurmountable objection to the word "fish." The "finny prey" is no improvement on the "scaly breed" of "Windsor Forest."

[3] This admired line is imitated from Dryden's "Persius":

> She knows her man, and when you rant and swear,
> Can draw you to her with a single hair.

The baron saw, admired, and coveted the locks, and resolved to possess one by force or fraud. The guardian sylph, "with careful thoughts oppressed," rallies round him his forces, and a delightful description follows of the "lucid squadrons of the air," sylphs, sylphids, fays, fairies, elves, and genii.[1] Ariel informs his followers that black omens threaten the fairest of the fair. Some dire disaster is about to befall her, though what or where the Fates had wrapped in night.

> Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
> Or some frail china jar receive a flaw;
> Or stain her honour or her new brocade;
> Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade;
> Or lose her heart or necklace at a ball;
> Or whether Heaven has doomed that Shock must fall.[2]

To each attendant sylph Ariel gives one special charge—the fan to Zephyretta, the ear-drops to Brilliante, the watch to Momentilla, the favourite lock to Crispina, while he himself will be the guard of Shock. He concludes by addressing the following awful warning to any spirit who shall neglect his post or prove careless of his charge. The offending sylph—

> Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins,
> Be stopped in phials, or transfixed with pins;

[1] Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,
Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light.
Loose to the wind their airy garments flew,
Thin, glittering textures of the filmy dew,
Dipped in the richest tincture of the skies,
Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes;
While every beam new transient colours flings,
Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings.

[2] Taine remarks that if Miss Fermor had been a French woman she would have returned Pope his book and bade him learn manners. "All his stock of phrases is but a parade of gallantry which betrays indelicacy and coarseness."

> Or plunged in lakes of bitter washes lie,
> Or wedged whole ages in a bodkin's eye;
> Gums and pomatum shall his flight restrain,
> While clogged he beats his silken wings in vain;
> Or alum styptics, with contracting power,
> Shrink his thin essence like a rivelled flower:
> Or, as Ixion fixed, the wretch shall feel
> The giddy motion of the whirling mill,
> In fumes of burning chocolate shall glow,
> And tremble at the sea that froths below.

With Canto III. the party arrives at Hampton Court, and several instructive hours are spent in fashionable conversation.

> One speaks the glory of the British Queen,
> And one describes a charming Indian screen;
> A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;
> At every word a reputation dies.

Tired at length of gossip, Belinda burns to encounter two adventurous knights, and "at ombre singly to decide their doom." The players assemble, the cards are dealt, and an elaborate description of the game follows.[1] This is the most dramatic episode in the poem, but it is too long for quotation. Moreover, it is difficult for the modern reader, unfamiliar with the rules and terms of ombre, to

[1] The description of the picture-cards may be quoted:

> Behold four kings, in majesty revered,
> With hoary whisker and a forky beard;
> And four fair queens whose hands sustain a flower,
> Th' expressive emblem of their softer power;
> Four knaves in garb succinct, a trusty band,
> Caps on their heads and halberts in their hand;
> And parti-coloured hoops, a shining train,
> Draw forth to combat on the velvet plain.

The account of the game at ombre is evidently suggested by the game at chess in Vida's poem, "Scacchia Ludus."

follow the fortunes of the mimic warfare. Suffice it to say that, when the game is trembling in the balance, and Belinda, pale as death, sees herself "in the jaws of ruin and codille," her king of hearts takes that "one nice trick" upon which the general fate depends, and wins her the game. Overjoyed at her victory—

> The nymph exulting fills with shouts the sky;
> The walls, the woods, and long canals reply.

Belinda's triumph was destined to be brief. Tea and coffee are brought in, and while the heroine unsuspectingly sips her Bohea, the fumes of the coffee fill the baron's brain with "new stratagems the radiant lock to gain." A faithless damsel, named Clarissa, draws a pair of scissors from her case, and hands them to the youth. Belinda perceives nothing, but the sylphs are on the alert.

> Swift to the lock a thousand sprites repair,
> A thousand wings by turns blow back the hair,
> And thrice they twitched the diamond in her hair.

But all their efforts are in vain, and the moment of the baron's triumph approaches. He spreads the "glittering forfex" wide, and the next instant—

> The meeting points the sacred hair dissever
> From the fair head for ever and for ever!
> Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes
> And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies.
> Not louder shrieks to pitying heav'n are cast
> When husbands or when lap-dogs breathe their last,
> Or when rich china vessels, fall'n from high,
> In glittering dust and painted fragments lie.

At the opening of Canto IV. we find Belinda

still mourning for her lost curl. Ariel has fled weeping, and Umbriel, a dusky, melancholy sprite, repairs to the cave of Spleen, and begs the goddess to "touch Belinda with chagrin." [1] His request is granted, and, armed with a bag of sighs, sobs, passions, and the war of tongues, as well as a phial of soft sorrows, melting griefs, and flowing tears, he returns to Hampton Court, where—

> Sunk in Thalestris' arms the nymph he found,
> Her eyes dejected and her hair unbound.
> Full o'er their heads the swelling bag he rent,
> And all the Furies issued at the vent.

Thalestris declaims bitterly against both the crime and the criminal, then seeks out Sir Plume and bids him go to the baron and demand the lock.

> Sir Plume, of amber snuff-box justly vain,
> And the nice conduct of a clouded cane,
> With earnest eyes and round, unthinking face,
> He first the snuff-box opened, then the case,
> And thus broke out: "My Lord! why, what the devil!
> Zounds! damn the lock! 'fore Gad, you must be civil.
> Plague on't! 'tis past a jest—nay, prithee, pox!
> Give her the hair——" he spoke, and rapped his box.

The peer refuses to yield up his prize, and Belinda, drowned in tears, deplores her unhappy fate, and wishes that, instead of going to Hampton Court, she had stayed at home and said her prayers.

In Canto V. Belinda is still surrounded by a sympathetic audience, to whom the grave Clarissa, a well-meaning friend, delivers a discourse on the

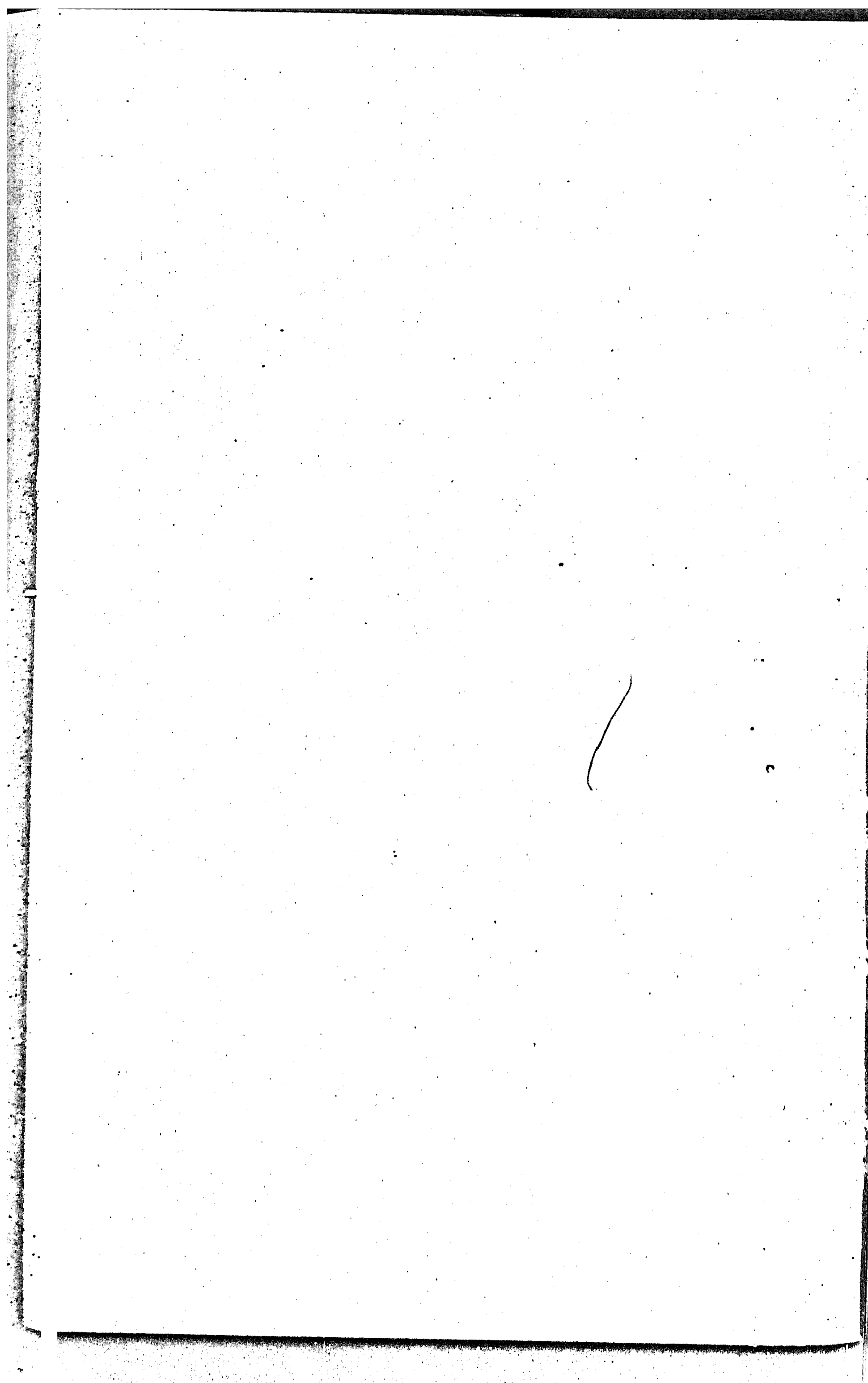
[1] Dennis objected, not altogether without reason, that Belinda was already touched with chagrin, and therefore there was no necessity to visit the cave of Spleen.



From an engraving by C. Du Bosc after a painting by L. Du Guernier

"THE RAPE OF THE LOCK," CANTO III.

From the second edition of the poem, 1714.



undue homage paid to mere beauty, and exalts the unfashionable virtues of good sense and good humour.[1] The address is ill received by the company, and the fiery Thalestris raises the cry "To arms!" Then ensues an Homeric combat between the beaux and belles, while fans clap, silks rustle, and tough whale-bones crack:

> A beau and witling perished in the throng,
> One died in metaphor and one in song.[2]

Belinda tries conclusions with the Baron, and overcomes him with a pinch of snuff. While he is temporarily incapacitated by a fit of sneezing, she draws her deadly bodkin from her side. He pleads for his life, but she will only grant it on condition that he restores the lock. Alas—

> The lock obtained with guilt, but kept with pain
> In every place is sought, and sought in vain.

[1] This is a brilliant parody of the speech of Sarpedon to Glaucus in Homer. A few lines may be quoted:

> Oh! if to dance all night and dress all day
> Charmed the small-pox, or chased old age away,
> Who would not scorn what housewives' cares produce,
> Or who would learn one earthly thing of use?
> To patch, nay ogle, might become a saint,
> Nor could it, sure, be such a sin to paint.
> But since, alas! frail beauty must decay,
> Curled, or uncurled, since locks will turn to grey;
> Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,
> And she who scorns a man must die a maid;
> What then remains but well our power to use,
> And keep good humour still, whate'er we lose?

[2] Dennis alludes to this couplet as a miserable pleasantry, since here is a real combat and a metaphorical dying. Pope evidently had in his mind a line in Buckingham's "Essay on Poetry":

> They sigh in simile and die in rhyme.

The Muse alone had followed its upward flight, and saw that, like—

> A sudden star, it shot through liquid air,
> And drew behind a radiant trail of hair.
> Not Berenice's locks first rose so bright,
> The heav'ns bespangling with dishevelled light.

In times to come happy lovers would mistake the starry lock for Venus, and, viewing it, that egregious wizard, Partridge, would foredoom—

> The fate of Louis and the fall of Rome.

Belinda is adjured to cease mourning for the ravished curl, since, on the word of the poet—

> Not all the tresses that fair head can boast,
> Shall draw such envy as the lock you lost.
> For, after all the murders of your eye,
> When, after millions slain, yourself shall die;
> When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,
> And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,
> This lock the Muse shall consecrate to fame.
> And midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.

In "The Rape of the Lock" Pope had "found himself." The manner of the poem was no doubt suggested by Tassoni's "Rape of the Bucket,"[1] and Boileau's "Lutrin,"[2] while some hints were taken from Garth's "Dispensary,"[3] but Pope had

[1] Tassoni pretends that the war between Modena and Bologna in the thirteenth century was caused by the carrying off of a bucket. His poem was published in 1622.

[2] "Le Lutrin" deals with a squabble between the treasurer and precentor of La Sainte Chapelle about the position of a reading-desk. The complete version was published in 1683.

[3] Garth's "Dispensary," published in 1699, is written round a quarrel between the College of Physicians and the Company of Apothecaries over the gratuitous dispensation of drugs to the poor.

far surpassed his models. The piece is conceived in the true spirit of high comedy, airy, pointed, and elegant, while the heroic style is consistently preserved throughout. It is the only good-humoured satire that the poet has given us, and none other is distinguished by such light-hearted gaiety and charm. He moves among his characters with the polished ease of one who has "learnt to dance." The truth is, that he had lighted upon a subject that gave fullest scope to the finest qualities of his mind, while it could not be seriously injured by the weaker points of his character. "He was essentially the poet of personality and polished life. He judged of beauty by fashion, and sought for truth in the opinions of the world." The artificiality of his youthful style, which ruined his studies of nature, was no flaw in a picture of fashionable life. His description of a lady's dressing-table is as superior to his description of a country-scene as his witty parodies of the classics are superior to his serious imitations in the "Pastorals."

The critics, old and new, have been almost unanimous in showering praises on "The Rape of the Lock." Hazlitt declares that the poem is the "most exquisite specimen of filigree work ever invented. It is made of gauze and silver spangles. The most glittering appearance is given to everything—to paste, pomatum, *billets-doux*, and patches. The little is made great, the great little. You hardly know whether to laugh or weep. It is the triumph of insignificance, the apotheosis of foppery and folly." [1]

[1] De Quincey describes the Rape as "the most exquisite monument of playful fancy that universal literature offers."

It would be idle to deny that there are faults in the poem, but—to paraphrase Pope himself:

> If to his share some natural errors fall,
> Look on his style, and you'll forget them all.

One critic, however, was not prepared to overlook any errors in one whom he regarded as a bitter enemy. This, of course, was Dennis, who wrote a series of "Letters on the Rape of the Lock," but did not publish them till after the appearance of "The Dunciad" in 1728. He describes the poem as "one of the last imitations of the finicking bard, and one of the most impertinent. The faults begin in the title-page, for the poem is called Heroi-comical, when there is not so much as a jest in the whole book. Of all blockheads he is the most emphatically dull who, to an insipid, tedious tale, prefixes this impertinent title." Comparing the Rape with "Le Lutrin," Dennis complains that the former is an empty trifle and has neither fable nor moral, while the latter has both, and is serious under the trifling. Belinda, again, is a chimera, not a character, and though Pope describes her as perfectly beautiful, well-bred, modest and virtuous, yet he makes her owe the greater part of her beauty to her toilette, and shows her behaving like a termagant, and talking like an "errant suburban."

It must be confessed that Pope, true to his theory that "most women have no character at all," makes Belinda a fashion-plate rather than a living creature.

Johnson thought it the most ingenious and the most delightful of all Pope's compositions. Warton considered it the best satire extant, and far superior, in point of delicacy and finely-turned raillery, to anything that the French had produced.

We are told of her charm, but she gives no proof of it. Her friends, both men and women, are equally devoid of "character," and seem less real than the sylphs that surround them. But the poet may have intended to show the unreality and emptiness, the absence of all true humanity in the fashionable world that he haunted, envied, and affected to despise. Although Pope invariably addresses his female friends in a style of exaggerated deference and over-strained flattery, he displays throughout his works a spiteful contempt for women which probably had its source in wounded vanity. He speaks of himself in one letter at this time as "the little Alexander whom the women laugh at," and assuredly Fate has no fury like a "poet scorned." Sex-jealousy, moreover, is always more strongly developed in the man of weak physique. The cripple, the deformed, and the chronic invalid are urged by the instinct of self-preservation to fight tooth and nail against the abolition of masculine monopolies, while they think to prop up their claims to virility by loudly proclaiming the inferiority of women. "The princeliest must have won his title to the place before he can yield other than complimentary station to a woman without violation of his dignity." Pope was not princely in this sense, and he never dared yield other than complimentary station to a woman.

Pope had communicated to Addison his design of adding the new "machinery"[1] to "The Rape of the Lock," but Addison had advised him to leave

[1] Pope told Spence that "the making the machinery, and what was published before, hit so well together is, I think, one of the greatest proofs of judgment of anything I ever did."

his poem alone, as it was a delicious little thing as it stood, and *merum sal*. After the unequivocal success of the new version—three thousand copies were sold in the first few weeks—Pope chose to think that Addison had given his advice in bad faith, and professed to be deeply shocked at the duplicity of his friend, to whose true character his eyes were now opened. Considering that he himself had made the same kind of mistake when he advised Addison not to bring *Cato* on the stage, this point of view seemed unreasonable, to say the least of it. Addison probably thought that the suggested machinery would bring in the tiresome train of gods and goddesses who had done duty as the "supernatural agency" in the "Pastorals" and "Windsor Forest." Macaulay remarks that the only instance in which a work of imagination has not been injured by being recast is furnished by "The Rape of the Lock." Tasso re-cast his "Jerusalem," Akenside recast his "Pleasures of Imagination," and Pope himself recast "The Dunciad"; but all these attempts were failures.

Pope's personal friends were unanimous in their appreciation of the amended poem. Old Sir William Trumbull, who regarded himself as the young man's literary godfather, wrote his warm congratulations, together with a solemn warning against the perils of town life.

"You have given me," he says, "the truest satisfaction imaginable, not only making good the just opinion I have ever had of your reach of thought and my idea of your comprehensive genius, but likewise in that pleasure I take, as an English-man, to see the French, even Boileau himself in his

Lutrin, outdone in your poem. . . . I now come to what is of vast moment, I mean the preservation of your health, and beg you earnestly to get out of all tavern company, and fly away *tanquam ex incendio.* What a misery is it for you to be destroyed by the foolish kindness (it is all one, whether real or pretended) of those who are able to bear the poison of bad wine and to engage you in so unequal a combat!"

Not less enthusiastic was the learned Berkeley, who at this time was chaplain to Lord Peterborough, a post he had obtained through the favour of Swift.[1] Writing on May 1 from Leghorn, he says he has accidentally met with "The Rape of the Lock," and adds: "Style, painting, judgment, spirit, I had already admired in other of your writings; but in this I am charmed with the magic of your invention, with all those images, allusions, and inexplicable beauties which you raise so surprisingly but at the same time so naturally out of a trifle." He has heard Pope mention some half-formed design of coming to Italy, and exclaims: "What might we not expect from a Muse that sings so well in the black climate of England, if she felt the same warm sun and breathed the same air with Virgil and Horace?"

It was the fashion then for poets to allude to their most ambitious works as mere trifles, dashed off at a moment of leisure, and Pope was nothing

[1] Dr. George Berkeley (1685–1753). Berkeley was made Dean of Derry in 1724, and Bishop of Cloyne in 1734. It was in 1725 that he made his famous attempt to found a missionary training college in the Bermudas.

if not fashionable. He had given his acquaintances to understand, as we have seen, that his masterpiece had only been written to please a friend, and with no idea of publication. Now that he had remodelled it he was willing to admit that it was not a bad little piece of its frivolous kind. Among his few women correspondents at this time was a certain Miss Betty Marriot, who lived with her mother at the village of Stuston, in Suffolk. Miss Betty, being young and a belle, sighed for the delights of London, for balls, operas, and masquerades. On one of her visits to town she had met the poet, and a mild flirtation had sprung up between the pair. Pope presented her with a copy of "The Rape of the Lock," and in the accompanying letter explained that he was sending her a whimsical piece of work, "which is at once the most a satire and the most inoffensive of anything of mine. People who would rather it were let alone laugh at it, and seem heartily merry, at the same time that they are uneasy. 'Tis a sort of writing very like tickling. I am so vain as to fancy it a pretty complete picture of the life of our modern ladies in this idle town, from which you are so happily, so prudently, so philosophically retired."

CHAPTER XII

1714

Work on the "Iliad"—The death of Queen Anne

EXCEPT for a brief visit to London in March, Pope seems to have spent the first half of this year—1714—at Binfield in close company with Homer. Subscriptions were coming in briskly for the first volume of the "Iliad," and the poet found subscribing, or, more accurately, receiving subscriptions, a much more agreeable occupation than writing. "There is a sort of little epigrams I more especially delight in," he says, "after the manner of rondeaux, which begin and end all in the same words, viz. 'Received' and 'A. Pope.' These epigrams end smartly, and are each of them tagged with two guineas."[1]

The Greek fortifications he finds, at a nearer approach, less formidable than he had feared. There were, indeed, the critics and commentators who lay entrenched in ditches, and who would frighten many people by their numbers and bulk. But he has discovered a more speedy and gallant method of coming

[1] It has been well said that Pope seems to have received a national commission to translate the "Iliad," as being by general consent the best poet of his time.

at the main works than by mining underground, and that was by using poetical machines—wings—and flying thither over the heads of the enemy.

At this time Pope had a valuable assistant in the person of his friend Parnell, a fine scholar, who had promised to provide the Introduction to the "Iliad," and who paid a long visit to Binfield in the spring to help with the study of classical commentators. The two friends wrote to Gay on May 4, and invited him to stay in the Forest, where his taste for books, friendship, and ease would equally be indulged. "You might here converse with the old Greeks," says Pope, "be initiated into all their customs, and learn their prayers by heart, as we have done. The doctor last Sunday, intending to say 'Our Father,' was got half-way in Chryses' prayer to Apollo. . . . I have contracted a severity of aspect from deep meditation on high subjects, equal to the formidable front of black-browed Jupiter, and become an awful nod as well, when I assent to some grave and weighty proposition of the doctor, or enforce a criticism of my own."

Parnell stayed in the Forest through May, and no sooner had he left than the unhappy translator found himself in a sea of (critical) troubles. "The minute I lost you," he complains, "Eustathius, with nine hundred pages, and nine thousand contractions of the Greek character, arose to my view! Spondamus, with all his auxiliaries, in number a thousand pages (value three shillings), and Dacier's three volumes, Barnes's two, Valterie's three, Cuperus, half in Greek, Leo Allatius, three parts in Greek, Scaliger, Macrobius, and (worse than all) Aulus Gellius! I cursed

them all religiously, damned my best friends among the rest, and even blasphemed Homer himself."

Parnell, it appears, was able not only to grapple with Eustathius and all his works, but even to perform miracles in the family of Pope. "You have made old people fond of a young, gay person, and inveterate Papists of a clergyman of the Church of England; even nurse herself is in danger of being in love in her old age, and (for all I know) would even marry Dennis[1] for your sake, because he is your man, and loves his master."

Pope was seldom without a quarrel, serious or trivial, on his hands, and he was again at daggers drawn with Philips, who had never forgiven the ridicule thrown on his "Pastorals" in *The Guardian*. Writing to Caryll[2] on June 8, Pope relates that—

"Mr. Philips did express himself with much indignation against me one evening at Button's Coffee-house, as I was told, saying that I was entered into a cabal with Dean Swift and others to write against the Whig interest, and in particular to undermine his own reputation and that of his friends, Steele and Addison; but Mr. Philips never opened his lips to my face, on this or any other occasion, though I was almost every night in the same room with him, nor ever offered me any indecorum. Mr. Addison came to me a night or two after Philips had talked in this idle manner, and assured me of his disbelief of what had been said,

[1] Parnell's Irish man-servant.

[2] The letter is addressed to "The Honourable ——." But this is a heading occasionally used by Pope, in his published Correspondence, for letters to Caryll.

of the friendship we should always maintain, and desired I would say nothing further of it. My Lord Halifax did me the honour to stir in this matter, by speaking to several people to obviate a false aspersion, which might have done me no small prejudice with one party. However, Philips did all he could secretly to continue the report with the Hanover Club,[1] and kept in his hands the subscriptions paid for me to him, as secretary to that club. The heads of it have since given him to understand that they take it ill; but upon the terms I ought to be with a man whom I think a scoundrel, I would not ask him for his money, but commissioned one of the players, his equals, to receive it."

Pope adds that it was to this behaviour of Philips that the world owed Gay's newly published "Shepherd's Week." Though originally intended as a burlesque of Philips's "Pastorals," the poem pleased the public, who accepted it on its own merits as a realistic picture of rustic life. "The Shepherd's Week" was dedicated to Bolingbroke, but the "Rural Sports," published the previous year, had been dedicated to Pope in most flattering terms,[2] and Pope had repaid the compliment, in substantial

[1] The Hanover Club consisted of persons who desired to testify their devotion to the Hanoverian line and the Protestant succession, in contradistinction to the Jacobites.

[2] The poem opens with the lines:

> You, who the sweets of rural life have known,
> Despise th' ungrateful hurry of the town;
> Midst Windsor groves your easie hours employ,
> And, undisturbed, yourself and Muse enjoy.
> Soft, flowing Thames his mazy course retains,
> And in suspense admires thy charming strains;
> The river-god and nymphs about thee throng,
> To hear the Syren warble in thy song.

fashion, by obtaining for Gay, through Swift's influence, the secretaryship to Lord Clarendon's embassy to Hanover. In those days the fact that a man had written some pleasing verses and was a popular figure at the clubs seemed sufficient reason for his appointment to an important public position. Throughout his life, it may be remarked, Gay was dealt good hands, but he played them unskilfully, or it may have been that the cards "lay badly." On this occasion the luck was clearly against him. Lord Clarendon's mission did not arrive at Hanover till after the queen's death, and this belated attempt of the Tories to curry favour with their future king ended in discomfiture.

Pope at this period stood resolutely aloof from public affairs, but he is intimately connected with the political life of the time through the quarrels, ambitions, and disappointments of his distinguished friends. It became apparent, early in the year, that the queen had not long to live, and the last months of her unhappy life were embittered by the quarrels of Bolingbroke and Oxford. Swift was vainly trying to keep the peace between the pair, since in their co-operation lay the one hope of carrying on the now discredited Tory Government. The Whigs were waiting and watching, ready, when occasion offered, to deal a blow at their weakened enemy. Steele had made a shrewd thrust in his pamphlet, "The Crisis," for which, in March of this year, he was expelled from the House of Commons. Writing to Caryll on March 19, Pope gives the news of Steele's misfortune, and adds:

"I am sorry I can be of no other opinion than

yours as to his whole carriage and writings of late; but, certainly, he has not only been punished by others, but suffered much even from his own party in the point of character, nor, I believe, received any amends in that of interest as yet, whatever may be his prospects for the future. This gentleman, among a thousand others, is a great instance of the fate of all who are carried away by party strife of any side. I wish all violence may succeed as ill; but am really annoyed that so much of that vile and pernicious quality should be joined with so much good humour as Mr. Steele has."

In April Swift had applied, through Bolingbroke, for the post of historiographer to the queen, and had deeply resented his failure to obtain the post. By the end of May he realised that his efforts to reconcile the rival leaders were vain, and, without announcing his intention, he suddenly retired to the house of a clerical friend—Mr. Gery, at Upper Letcombe, in Berkshire—where he prepared one last bombshell for the benefit of his friend, the enemy—his pamphlet entitled, "Free Thoughts on the present State of Affairs." Bolingbroke, with the aid of his ally, Lady Masham, was plotting to wrest the power from Oxford's hands, and, Samson-like, was pulling down the edifice of Tory power by means of his unpopular Schism Bill. Steele, who had often "held the pen" in the happier days of the Scriblerus Club when party spirit ran less high, was now the open and bitter enemy of Swift. Arbuthnot alone kept on his manly, straightforward course, watching by his dying mistress's bedside, careless of his own interests, and hating no man.

From a jocular letter addressed by Pope to Swift on June 18, it appears that the dean had withheld his address from most of his friends, and that many rumours were afloat concerning his doings and whereabouts. "At Button's it is reported that you are gone to Hanover, and that Gay only goes on an embassy to you." Some people apprehended a dangerous state treatise, while others were ready to accept the suggestion that the dean was gone to meet some Jesuits from the Court of Rome to arrange for the coming of the Pretender. "Dr. Arbuthnot is singular in his opinion, and imagines your only design is to attend, at full leisure, to the life and adventures of Scriblerus. This, indeed, must be granted of greater importance than all the rest, and I wish I could promise so well of you. The top of my own ambition is to contribute to that great work, and I shall translate Homer by the bye."

A fortnight later Pope and Parnell made a pilgrimage to Swift's retreat, which was only thirty miles from Binfield, and passed some days with the dean, who was living the "simple life," and paying his reverend host a guinea a week for his board. Pope wrote an amusing account of the visit to Arbuthnot in the form of a news-letter:

"From Letcombe, near Wantage,
July 4.

"This day the envoys deputed to Dean Swift arrived here during the time of divine service. They were received at the back-door, and, having paid the usual compliments on their part, and

received the usual chidings on that of the dean, were introduced to his landlady and entertained with a pint of the Lord Bolingbroke's Florence. The health of that great minister was drunk in that pint, together with the Lord Treasurer's, whose wine we also wished for; after which were commemorated Dr. Arbuthnot and Mr. Lewis in a sort of cider, plentiful in these parts, and not altogether unknown in the taverns of London. There was likewise a sideboard of coffee, which the dean roasted with his own hands, his landlady attending all the while that office was performing. He talked of politics over coffee with the air and style of an old statesman, who had known something formerly, but was shamefully ignorant of the last three weeks. When we mentioned the welfare of England he laughed at us, and said Muscovy would become a flourishing empire very shortly. He seems to have wrong notions of the British Court, but gave us a hint as if he had a correspondence with the King of Sweden."

Swift himself gives a much less cheerful account of his surroundings in a letter to "Vanessa." Though he likes his host very well, Mr. Gery is "such a melancholy, thoughtful man, partly from nature and partly from solitude, that I shall soon catch the spleen from him. His wife has been this month twenty miles off at her father's, and will not return these ten days, and perhaps the house will be worse when she comes. I read all day or walk, and do not speak so many words as I have now writ in three days."

Oxford narrowly escaped a vote of censure at the beginning of July, but he shuffled cheerfully on, prevaricating over every dangerous question, and postponing all tiresome business to the morrow. Altogether, the "Dragon" seems to have been the person least affected by the rickety state of his government, while such worries as even he could not escape might be drowned in a bottle of good wine. Arbuthnot, writing to Swift only a few weeks before the queen's death, says: "The Dragon was with us on Saturday night last, having sent us really a most excellent copy of verses. I really believe when he lays down he will prove a very good poet. I remember the first part of his verses was complaining of his ill-usage, and at last he concludes:

> He that cares not to rule will be sure to obey
> When summoned by Arbuthnot, Pope, Parnell, and Gay.

But the queen's patience came to an end at last, or it may be that in her last hours she was guided entirely by Lady Masham, who had the impatient Bolingbroke at her elbow. On July 27 Oxford was dismissed, the reasons given by the queen for parting with him being: "That he neglected all business; that he was seldom to be understood; that, when he did explain himself, she could not depend on the truth of what he said; that he never came to her at the time she appointed; that he often came drunk; that he behaved himself towards her with bad manners, indecency, and disrespect."

On August 1, just as Bolingbroke had stretched

out his hand to grasp the reins of power, the queen's long sufferings were ended. With her dying hand she gave the staff to the Duke of Shrewsbury, and the reign of the Tories was over. "The Earl of Oxford was removed on Tuesday," wrote Bolingbroke to Swift, "and the queen died on Sunday. What a world is this! and how does Fortune banter us!"

In a very different strain was the letter sent by Arbuthnot to Letcombe:

"My dear mistress's days were numbered, even in my imagination, and could not exceed such certain limits; but of that number a great deal was cut off by the last troublesome scene of contention among her servants. I believe sleep was never more welcome to a weary traveller than death was to her. . . . My case is not half so deplorable as poor Lady Masham's and several of the queen's servants, some of whom have no chance for their bread but the generosity of his present majesty."

During these exciting, and—to Papists—perilous times, Pope had deemed it prudent to stay quietly at Binfield, and translate as much of Homer as perpetual headaches would permit. "The same thing," he remarks, "that makes old men willing to leave this world, makes me willing to leave poetry—long habit and weariness of the same track. Homer will work a cure upon me. Fifteen thousand verses are equivalent to fourscore years, to make me old in rhyme."

It was not until after the death of the queen that he was tempted to take a trip to London, "moved by the common curiosity of mankind, who

leave their business to be looking on other men's."[1] At the same time he professes to be raised far above all party feeling by his philosophy. His one hope, in this new turn of affairs, is that it may put an end to the divisions of Whig and Tory, and that those parties may love each other as well as he loves them both. The greatest fear he has, as a poor Papist, is the loss of his horse. Still, if they take his horse[2] away, he can walk; if they take his house away, he can go into lodgings; and if they take his money away, he can write for his bread." In short, no one was ever so meek, so patient, or so long-suffering as Mr. Pope—until he was attacked.

[1] Lord Bathurst used to say that Pope always bobbed up in town when anything exciting was going forward, like a porpoise in a storm.

[2] It was illegal for a Roman Catholic to keep a horse above the value of five pounds, but this law had never been stringently enforced. Stories were current, however, of gentlemen who, having a grudge against their Catholic neighbours, claimed their horses in the hunting field, and refused to pay more than five pounds, even for a valuable animal. It was also illegal for a Catholic to own land, or keep a school; but these laws were not observed.

CHAPTER XIII

1714

Relations with Addison—Correspondence with the Blounts—Visit to Bath—"Epistle to a Young Lady on Leaving Town"

THE death of the Queen was followed by the break-up of the pleasant literary society which even party spirit had not been able to spoil, and for the time being Pope's friends were scattered. Bolingbroke, the optimistic, thought that all was not yet lost, and that as prosperity divided, so misfortune might to some degree unite the party. But his friends and colleagues had no such faith. Oxford retired into the country, Swift returned to Ireland, Gay was still with his abortive embassy at Hanover, Arbuthnot, his occupation with his royal patient being gone, exchanged St. James's for modest lodgings in Dover Street, where, he wrote, he would be glad to see Dr. Parnell, Mr. Pope, and his old friends, to whom he could still afford a half-pint of claret. "I have seen," he adds, "a letter from Dr. Swift: he keeps up his noble spirit, and, though like a man knocked down, you may behold him still with a stern countenance, and aiming a blow at his adversaries."

George I. was in no hurry to try on his English crown, being shrewd enough to suspect that it might prove a misfit. He lingered at Hanover, leaving his new country to be governed by the Lords Justices, and keeping his subjects in a cruel state of suspense. There was a general belief that he would choose his advisers from among the moderate men of both parties, and it was felt that there was hope for all save the Jacobites. On the other hand, it could not be forgotten that there were two kings of Brentford, and the king by right divine might land before his legally proclaimed cousin. Leading statesmen, who were not troubled by scruples, sat on the fence, and negotiated openly with Hanover and secretly with St. Germains. There were hot-beds of Jacobitism in the North and the West, while both the universities were disaffected. Expresses were racing up and down between London and Scotland, politicians were hurrying to their constituencies in view of the approaching elections, and the whole nation was standing treat or being treated.

To judge from his correspondence, Pope was much more interested in his private affairs at this time than in the public ferment. His letters are chiefly concerned with his health, his work, his relations with Addison, and his flirtations with the Miss Blounts. The question "Under which king?" must have possessed the keenest interest for the family at Binfield and for their fellow-Catholics, but no prudent Papist dared to discuss the subject, and even the post office was not to be trusted. In August Pope was corresponding with his friend and

master, Jervas, on the innocuous topic of a head of Homer which the artist was to execute for the first volume of the "Iliad." Jervas, anxious to do his pupil a good turn, had been putting in a word for him with Addison, who, as Secretary to the Lords Justices, had once again become a person of influence and importance in the political world. On August 20 Jervas writes that he wishes Pope could have hidden his little person behind some wainscot or half-length picture, and overheard a conversation that he—Jervas—had held with Addison.

"He assured me," says the painter, "that he would make use not only of his interest, but of his art to do you some service; he did not mean his art of poetry, but his art at Court; and he is sensible that nothing can have a better air for himself than moving in your favour, especially since insinuations were spread that he did not care you should prosper too much as a poet. He protests that it shall not be his fault if there is not the best intelligence in the world, and the most hearty friendship, etc. He owns he was afraid Dr. Swift might have carried you too far among the enemy during the heat of the animosity; but now all is safe, and you are escaped, even in his opinion. I promised in your name, like a good godfather, not that you should renounce the devil and all his works, but that you would be delighted to find him your friend, merely for his own sake; therefore prepare yourself for some civilities."

The letter might perhaps have been more tactfully worded. Pope, scenting the breath of patronage, replied in rather off-hand style. He acknowledges

Jervas's friendly endeavours to do him a service with Mr. Addison, and continues :

"You thoroughly know my regard to his character, and my propensity to testify it by all ways in my power. You as thoroughly know the scandalous meanness of that proceeding which was used by Philips, to make a man I so highly value suspect my disposition towards him.[1] But as, after all, Mr. Addison must be the judge in what regards himself, and has seemed to be no very just one to me, so I must own to you I expect nothing but civility from him, how much soever I wish for his friendship. As for any offices of real kindness or service which it is in his power to do me, I should be ashamed to receive them from any man who had no better opinion of my morals than to think me a party man, nor of my temper than to believe me capable of maligning or envying another's reputation as a poet."

As for his engagements to Swift, these were no more than were required by the actual services he had done to Pope in regard to the Homer subscriptions.

"I must have leave to be grateful to him, and to any one who serves me, let him be never so obnoxious to any party: nor did the Tory party ever put me to the hardship of asking this leave, which is the greatest obligation I have to it; and I expect no greater from the Whig party than the

[1] See Pope's letter to Caryll (June 8), in which he says that Philips had accused him of having entered into a cabal with Swift to write against the Whigs, and undermine the reputations of Addison and Steele.

same liberty. A curse on the word party, which I have been forced to use so often in this period."

Pope was now keeping up a fairly regular correspondence with the ladies of Mapledurham. In these early days Teresa appears to have been first favourite, though the poet professed to be equally devoted to both sisters. He writes to both in the same style of rather dreadful "gallantry"—a style that was modelled on Voiture's. His letters are too often smirched by the indecency which, at this period, he believed to be the soul of wit—or at least of such wit as was expected by a man of the world when writing to a pretty woman. It has often been asserted that the ladies of that day were accustomed to loose language and inconvenient jests, which meant no more than the ordinary chaff of our own time. But this assertion needs some qualification. It is true that people were more plain-spoken in the reign of Queen Anne than, for example, in the reign of Queen Victoria, and the great ladies were not too much scandalised at *un gros mot.* But the man of breeding, when addressing a woman whom he respected, kept his tongue and pen fairly clean. In the voluminous letters of Mrs. Delany there is not an unseemly phrase, though Swift was among her correspondents. Again, Wortley Montagu, who was a gentleman, though a tiresome one, uses but a single coarse word in his correspondence with Lady Mary Pierrepoint during the period of their courtship, and that word is used in all seriousness and sincerity. In the early part of Lady Suffolk's correspondence there is rather a laxer tone, but the freest letters are those written by

maids of honour, who, under the first and second Georges, frequently failed to live up to their title.

That Pope's girl-correspondents were not all so tolerant as the Miss Blounts may be gathered from the fact that an improper letter which he sent to Miss Betty Marriot of Stuston got him into trouble with his Suffolk friends. He felt himself obliged to write to the Rector of Stuston, his friend and future colleague, William Broome,[1] to apologise for the letter, and explain that he was not sober when he wrote it! A duplicate copy had been sent to his sisters at Mapledurham, whose sense of propriety was apparently less easily outraged than that of Miss Marriot.

Martha Blount was taken ill with the small-pox in the summer of 1714. In an undated letter of sympathy, addressed to Teresa, Pope says: "A month ago I should have laughed at any one who told me my heart would be perpetually beating for a young lady that was thirty miles off from me; and indeed I never imagined my concern would be half so great for any young woman whom I have been no more obliged to than to so innocent an one as she." After wishing her long life and continued beauty, he concludes: "But whatever ravages a merciless distemper may commit, I dare promise her boldly, what few (if any) of her makers of visits and

[1] William Broome (1689-1745). Though the son of a farmer, he had been educated at Eton and Cambridge. He was considered a sound Greek scholar, and was nicknamed "the Poet" by his companions. He had translated the "Iliad" into prose with Ozell and Oldisworth, and Pope was glad of his assistance with the notes of Eustathius. Later, Broome was one of Pope's assistants in translating the "Odyssey."

compliments dare do : she shall have one man as much her admirer as ever."

In September Pope paid his first visit to Bath, with the faithful Parnell as his companion, and thence he wrote on the 25th : "I am this evening arrived extremely weary, and new to all the wonders of the place. I have stared at the Bath and sneaked along the walks with that astonished and diffident air which is natural to a modest and ignorant foreigner." There was as yet scarcely any company, and no lampoons were dispersed, so that he was able to walk about as innocently and as little dreaded as "that old lion of satire, Mr. Wycherley, who now goes tame about this town."

Patty Blount was ordered to the Bath after her illness by Dr. Radcliffe, but refused to go, and Pope wrote to Teresa to express his disappointment at this decision. He is convinced that she will never look so finely upon earth as she will in the water.

"Ladies," he exclaims, "I have seen you so often, I know perfectly how you look in black and white, I have experienced the utmost you can do in *any* colours ; but all your movements, all your graceful steps, all your attitudes and postures, deserve not half the glory you might here attain of a moving and easy behaviour in buckram ; something betwixt swimming and walking ; free enough, yet more modestly half-naked than you appear anywhere else."

He goes on to explain that his *violent* passion for Teresa and her sister is divided with the most wonderful regularity in the world. "Even from my infancy I have been in love with one after the other

of you, week by week, and my journey to Bath fell out in the three hundred and seventy-sixth week of the reign of my sovereign lady Martha. At the present writing, it is the three hundred and eighty-ninth week of the reign of your most serene majesty, in whose service I was listed some weeks before I beheld her." [1]

In September Gay returned from his mission to Hanover, where the Tory embassy had been coldly received by George I. Pope wrote to welcome him, whether he returned as a triumphant Whig or a desponding Tory, but hopes that he is a Whig, since "your principles and mine, as brother poets, had ever a bias to liberty." He admits, for once, that the late universal concern in public affairs had thrown them all into a hurry of spirits, and that even he, the philosophical Mr. Pope, was borne away with the current, and full of expectation of the successor. Since he can look for nothing in the way of worldly advancement for himself, he is willing to bestow a piece of practical advice on his friend: "Write something on the king, prince, or princess. On whatever foot you may be with the Court, this can do you no harm."

Poor Gay was only too willing to write anything on either side that might give him the chance of a

[1] Carruthers says that, "on applying the vulgar touchstone of arithmetic to this poetic declaration, we find that the attachment must have begun in the year 1707, when Teresa and Pope were in their nineteenth year, and Martha was seventeen." Martha seems to have told Spence that she first met Pope at her grandfather Englefield's house after the "Essay on Criticism" was printed, and that she was then a very little girl. As a matter of fact, she was twenty-one.

"place." He must have deeply regretted the dedication of his "Shepherd's Week" to Bolingbroke, but he set to work at once to make amends for that unintentional indiscretion, and in November brought out "An Epistle to a Lady, occasioned by the Arrival of her Royal Highness, the Princess of Wales."

Pope soon found himself engaged in all the amusements of the Bath, and seems to have enjoyed the new experience. "My whole day," he tells Martha Bount, "is shared by the pump assemblies, the walks, the chocolate-houses, raffling-shops, plays, medleys, etc. We have no ladies who have the face, though some of them may have the impudence, to expect a lampoon. The prettiest is one I had the luck to travel with, who has found me out so far as to tell me that, whatever pretences I make to gaiety, my heart is not at Bath."

He is endeavouring, he says, like other awkward fellows, to become agreeable by imitation, and sometimes copies the civil air of Gascoin and sometimes the impudent one of Nash.[1] He is even become so much of a rake as to feel ashamed of being seen with Dr. Parnell, and asks people abroad "who that parson is?" The place, of course, reeks with scandal, which refreshes and elevates his spirits, and he remarks, oddly enough, that if women could only digest scandal as well as men, there were two who might be the happiest creatures in the universe!

Teresa was able to be present at the coronation of George I. on October 20; but poor Patty was obliged to remain in the country. To Teresa Pope

[1] The long-celebrated Master of the Ceremonies—Beau Nash.

originally addressed his "Epistle to a Young Lady on leaving Town after the Coronation,"[1] but after his quarrel with the elder sister he made it appear that the Epistle was addressed to the younger.[2] Here again we have Pope in happy frame, less witty than in "The Rape of the Lock," but not less good-humoured. Fair Zephalinda is introduced as she unwillingly retires from the gaieties of town to "wholesome country air."

> She went to plain-work, and to purling brooks,
> Old-fashioned halls, dull aunts, and croaking rooks;
> She went from opera, park, assembly, play,
> To morning walks and prayers three hours a day;
> To part her time 'twixt reading and Bohea,
> To muse and spill her solitary tea,
> Or o'er cold coffee trifle with the spoon,
> Count the slow clock, and dine exact at noon;
> Divert her eyes with pictures in the fire,
> Hum half a tune, tell stories to the squire;
> Up to her godly garret after seven,
> There starve and pray, for that's the way to heaven.

Her only admirer is a rough country squire, who—

> With his hounds comes hallooing from the stable,
> Makes love with nods and knees beneath a table;
> Whose laughs are hearty, though his jests are coarse,
> And loves you best of all things—but his horse.

In pensive thought Zephalinda recalls each fancied scene, dreams of her past triumphs, and sees "Coronations rise on every green." In a charming passage

[1] This Epistle was not published till 1717.

[2] The heroine is called Zephalinda, the fanciful name under which Teresa corresponded with James Moore Smyth, afterwards satirised in "The Dunciad."

which is worth all his letters of gallantry and compliment put together, the poet concludes:

> So when your slave at some dear idle time,
> (Not plagued with headaches, or the want of rhyme)
> Stands in the streets, abstracted from the crew,
> And, while he seems to study, thinks of you;
> Just when his fancy points your sprightly eyes,
> Or sees the blush of soft Parthenia[1] rise,
> Gay pats my shoulder, and you vanish quite,
> Streets, chairs, and coxcombs rush upon my sight;
> Vex'd to be still in town, I knit my brow,
> Look sour, and hum a tune, as you may now.[2]

But if Pope addressed verses to Zephalinda, he wrote even more ardent love-letters to Parthenissa about the same time. Patty, it appears, had sent him two charming notes, and, when admittedly not quite sober, he replies, in more than usually rhapsodical style:

"Most Divine!

"It is some proof of my sincerity towards you that I write when I am prepared by drinking to speak the truth; and sure a letter after twelve at night must abound with that noble ingredient. That heart must have abundance of flames, which is at once warmed by wine and you. . . . In these overflowings of my heart I pay you my thanks for those two obliging letters you favoured me with of the 18th and 24th instant. That which begins with 'My charming Mr. Pope!' was a delight

[1] Parthenissa was the name that Martha assumed in the correspondence with Moore Smyth.

[2] One manuscript version ended with sixteen offensive lines, which were first published by Warton.

to me beyond expression; you have at last entirely gained conquest over your fair sister. It is true you are not handsome, for you are a woman, and think you are not; but this good-humour and tenderness for me has a charm which cannot be resisted. That face must needs be irresistible which was adorned with smiles, even when it could not see the coronation. I do suppose you will not show this epistle out of vanity, as I doubt not your sister does all I write to her. Indeed, to correspond with Mr. Pope may make any one proud who lives under a dejection of heart in the country. Every one values Mr. Pope, but every one for a different reason: one for his adherence to the Catholic faith, another for his neglect of Popish superstition; one for his grave behaviour, another for his whimsicalness; Mr. Titcomb for his pretty, atheistical jests, Mr. Caryll for his moral and Christian sentences; Mrs. Teresa for his reflections on Mrs. Patty, and Mrs. Patty for his reflections on Mrs. Teresa. It was but the other day I heard of Mrs. Fermor's being actually and directly married. I wonder how the couple at . . . look, stare, and simper since that grand secret came out, which they so well concealed before."[1]

[1] Miss Fermor married Mr. Perkins, of Upton Court, Reading, in 1714. She died in 1738. The "Baron," Lord Petre, had married Mrs. Warmsley, an heiress, in 1712, and died in 1713. Pope addressed to his Belinda a very dull and stilted letter on her marriage, which was printed with "The Rape of the Lock."

CHAPTER XIV

1714–15

Preparations for publishing the "Iliad"—"The New Rehearsal"—"The Temple of Fame"

POPE had finished the actual translation of the first four books of the "Iliad" before he went to Bath, but much still remained to be done before the first volume could be issued. The Preface had to be written, the notes prepared, and the Introduction—a "present" from Parnell—revised. In November the poet spent two or three weeks in London on business. The business consisted in part, as he tells Caryll, of "perpetually waiting upon the great, and using no less solicitation to gain their opinion upon my Homer, than others at this time do to obtain preferments. As soon as I can collect all the objections of the two or three noble judges, and of the five or six best poets, I shall fly to Ladyholt, as a proper place to review and correct the whole for the last time."

Pope had had time to reflect on Jervas's well-meant advice concerning his relations with Addison. He now thought it best to come down off his high horse, and approached "Mr. Secretary" in a conciliatory spirit. In October he wrote to Addison to express his sincere hope that some late malevolences had lost

their effect. "Indeed," he adds, "it is neither for me nor my enemies to pretend to tell you whether I am your friend or not; but if you judge by probabilities, I beg to know which of your poetical acquaintances has so little interest in pretending to be so. Methinks no man should question the real friendship of one who desires no real service. I am only to get as much from the Whigs as I got from the Tories, that is to say, civility." He has heard that Addison has spoken of him in a friendly manner, and is certain that the author of *Cato* could never speak one thing and think another. In proof of his faith, he will ask a favour. "It is that you would look over the first two books of my translation of Homer, which are in the hands of my Lord Halifax. I am sensible how much the poetical reputation of any poetical work will depend upon the reputation you give it." He also requests that Addison will point out the strokes of ill-nature which he had discovered in the "Essay on Criticism," now about to be reprinted.[1]

According to Roscoe's account, Addison replied that, as he had already read a translation by Tickell of the first book of the "Iliad," he did not feel that it would be right for him to read Pope's version. He was willing, however, to read the second book, which he did, and returned it with "high commendation."

The king and the Prince of Wales were among the subscribers for the "Iliad," the one sending a hundred guineas, the other fifty, while the leading Whigs were not slow to follow the royal lead. Lord

[1] The authenticity of this letter is doubtful.

Halifax, now at the head of the Treasury, who loved to pose as a patron of literature, made some vague suggestion about a pension, to which Pope returned an equally vague answer. He acknowledged the favours he had already received, and those Lord Halifax was pleased to intend him.

"Your lordship," he continues, "may either cause me to live agreeably in the town or contentedly in the country, which is really all the difference I set between an easy fortune and a small one. It is, indeed, a high strain of generosity in you, to think of making me easy all my life, only because I have been so happy as to divert you an hour or two; but, if I may have leave to add because you think me no enemy to my country, there will appear a better reason, for I must be of consequence."

Nothing came of the minister's tentative offer, but Pope was honoured with an invitation to read aloud his work at Halifax's house, on which occasion Addison, Congreve, and Garth were among the audience. Four or five times during the reading Lord Halifax stopped him very civilly, saying: "I beg your pardon, Mr. Pope, but there is something in that passage that does not quite please me. Be so good as to mark the place, and consider it a little more at your leisure. I am sure you can give it a better turn." Perplexed by this amorphous kind of criticism, Pope carefully went over the offending lines, but he could not discover what his lordship meant. At length he consulted Garth, who laughed heartily at his embarrassment, and said that evidently he had not been long enough acquainted with Lord Halifax to know his ways, and that there was no necessity for

puzzling over the criticised passages. "All you need do," he explained, "is to leave them just as they are; call on Lord Halifax two or three months hence, thank him for his kind observations on those passages, and then read them to him as altered." Pope followed the doctor's advice, and the next time his lordship heard the unaltered passages, he was extremely delighted, and cried out, "Aye now, Mr. Pope, they are perfectly right! Nothing can be better."[1]

The rout of Pope's Tory friends was now complete. Their faint hope that George I. might try to conciliate both parties had not been realised. One of the first acts of the new king had been to dismiss Bolingbroke from all his offices, and *à propos* of this disgrace Pope remarks, in an undated letter to the ladies of Mapledurham:

"I returned home as slow and contemplative after I had parted from you as my Lord (Bolingbroke) retired from the Court and glory to his country seat and wife a week ago. I found here a dismal, desponding letter from the son of another great courtier who expects the same fate, and who tells me the great ones of the earth will now take it very kindly of the mean ones if they will favour them with a visit by daylight." He sends Mrs. Patty half a hundred plays to stay her stomach till he can procure her a romance big enough to satisfy her great soul with adventures. "As for novels, I fear she can depend upon none from me but that of my life, which I am still, as I have been, contriving all possible methods to shorten, for the greater ease

[1] Spence's "Anecdotes."

both of the historian and of the reader. May she believe all the passion and tenderness expressed in the romances to be but a faint image of what I bear her, and may you (who read nothing) take the same truth on hearing it from me."

Now that the palmy days of the literary clubs and coffee-houses were almost at an end, owing to the eclipse of the Tory wits and the political occupations of the Whig wits, a glance may be given at a curious little skit by Gildon[1] called, *The new Rehearsal; or, Bays the Younger*, which satirises Pope, his friend Rowe, the dramatist, and, incidentally, the literary society that foregathered at Button's. The skit is, of course, a parody of Buckingham's famous farce, *The Rehearsal*, and the characters consist of Truewit, who has just returned to town from a long absence in the country, Freeman his friend, Sir Indolent Easie,[2] a man of wit who is pleased with everything and every writer, Mr. Bays the Younger,[3] a pedantic, reciting poet, admired by the mob and

[1] Charles Gildon (1665–1724). He wrote several plays and a "Life of Defoe." It is stated that he attacked Pope in some work relating to Wycherley, but this has not been identified. He was one of the victims of "The Dunciad."

[2] Truewit and Freeman are probably imaginary persons, but Sir Indolent Easie may have been meant for Steele.

[3] Bays the Younger was intended for Nicholas Rowe, the dramatist (1674–1718), who was a friend of Pope's. His most successful tragedies were *Tamerlane*, *Jane Shore*, and *Lady Jane Grey*. Like Pope, he edited Shakespeare and translated a classic. In a letter to Caryll (September 20, 1713) Pope says that Rowe has just spent a week with him at Binfield, and adds: "I need not tell you how much a man of his turn could not but entertain me; but I must acquaint you there is a vivacity and gaiety of disposition almost peculiar to that gentleman, which renders it impossible to part from him without that uneasiness and chagrin which generally succeeds all great pleasures."

by himself, and Sawney Dapper, "a young poet of the modern stamp, an easy versifyer, conceited, and a contemner secretly of others."[1] Truewit meets Freeman at the Rose Tavern, Covent Garden, and asks whether Will's still holds its ground, and whether men, now as formerly, become wits by sipping tea and coffee with Wycherley and the reigning poets.

"No, no," replies Freeman, "there have been great changes in the state of affairs. Button's is now the Established Wits' Coffee-house, and all the young scribblers pay their attendance nightly there to keep up their pretensions to sense and understanding." As for the poets, "a tolerable knack of versification sets any man up for an author, but as for force of genius, art, imagery, or true sense, they are still thought very needless qualifications in a poet." A discussion follows on Rowe's plays, and it is decided that these are not tragedies at all in the true sense of the word.

In the second Act Sawney Dapper and Sir Indolent Easie join the party. Dapper expresses his regret that he has just missed a discourse on his favourite subjects, poetry and criticism. "But," observes Freeman, "it was criticising upon poetry, which you gentlemen that entertain the town that way are mortal enemies to."

"I must needs say," replies Dapper, "that if I had not written a criticism myself I should not say so much in its praise. . . . I appeared first in the character of a critic *in terrorem* to the reigning

[1] Sawney was intended for Pope, and the name stuck to him all his life.

wits of the time, that they should the more easily admit me into their number. But then, for their encouragement, I writ in rhyme; and faith, to say truth, as to matter, not so far above them as to make them fear that I should not fall down to their level."

Truewit and Freeman, pretending to be greatly impressed, suggest that Dapper should teach the art of "raising a name by poetry without any."

Dapper. I know not but it might be a good project, and what I would undertake, did not the Greek poets lie on my hands now for a translation.

Sir Indolent. I did not know that you understood Greek. You are a mighty industrious young man.

Dapper. Why, if I did not understand Greek, what of that? I hope a man may translate a Greek author without understanding Greek.

He then proceeds to give a little dissertation on the arts and qualifications necessary to success in literature. It was essential to have a knack at rhyme and a flowing versification, but that was become so common that few wanted it. Then the author must choose "some odd, out-of-the-way subject, some trifle or other that would surprise the common reader to think that anything could be written upon it—such as a Fan, a Lock of Hair, or the like." Boileau and Garth, to be sure, had treated of little things with magnificence of verse, but something newer was wanted now, such as heroic doggrel,[1] which had but lately been found out, where the verse and the subject

[1] Sir Plume's speech is quoted as an example of "Heroic Doggrel."

agreed. It was desirable, also, to have a new manner of address, and to make women speak indecently, whether they were women of honour or no. One of his most successful methods of getting fame was to write a copy of verses in his own praise, and put the name of a celebrated old author to it.[1] Again, there were then, as the company knew, two parties of wits, with two or three men at the head of them. He first fixed himself on the good-nature and easy temper of the men of real merit, who cried him up, and recommended him to the town, and the town took their words.[2] He then gave his approbation to the works of the heads of the other party, that is, of those who had vogue and no merit, and by this means had gained them and all their friends.[3]

"I protest, sir," comments Truewit, "you are a great politician. I know not but what you may make a Minister of State in time, if ever the Pretender should come, by your candour and penetration."

Pope was certainly a politician in so far that he realised the importance of "keeping himself before the public." [4] His arduous work on the "Iliad" left him little or no leisure for original composition, but about this time he bethought him of his poem, "The

[1] Pope was accused of having written the copy of verses which Wycherley published in honour of the "Pastorals."

[2] The men of true merit were, no doubt, Steele and Addiscn.

[3] The heads of the other party of wits were presumably Swift and Arbuthnot.

[4] In 1714 Pope had written an amusing skit called "The Key to the Lock," which was published in 1715. In this he pretends that the Lock is intended for the Barrier Treaty, Belinda for Queen Anne, Clarissa for Lady Masham, Thalestris for the Duchess of Marlborough, Sir Plume for Prince Eugene, the Baron for Lord Oxford, the Wounded Sylph for Lord Townshend, and Shock for Dr. Sacheverel!

Temple of Fame," which had been written in 1710, and read by Steele in 1712. This imitation of Chaucer's "House of Fame" may not unjustly be described as an "academic exercise," and shows the poet still in leading-strings, but it is superior in style and versification to the work of his contemporaries. At any rate, Pope thought it worthy of publication, and in February, 1715, he sent a copy to Martha Blount, with the following letter:

"I know you will think it an agreeable thing to hear that I have done a great deal of Homer. If it be tolerable, the world may thank you for it; for, if I could have seen you every day, and imagined my company would have every day pleased you, I should scarce have thought it worth my while to please the world. . . . Whatever some may think, fame is a thing I am much less covetous of than your friendship; for that, I hope, will last all my life; the other I cannot answer for. . . . Now I talk of fame, I send you my 'Temple of Fame,' which is just come out, but my sentiments about it you will see better by this epigram:

> What's fame with men, by custom of this nation,
> Is called in women only reputation;
> About them both why keep we such a pother?
> Part you with one, and I'll renounce the other."

The critics who thought that Pope had improved upon Isaiah and Homer also held that he had improved upon Chaucer, but the general consensus of opinion has not been altogether favourable. The passage which has excited the most admiration in this rather frigid poem is that, appropriately enough,

which describes the rocks of Zembla. More interesting, however, is the description of the Temple of Rumour, with its reports of—

> Turns of fortune, changes in the State,
> The falls of favourites, projects of the great,
> Of old mismanagements, taxation new:
> All neither wholly false nor wholly true.

Although suggested by the original, these lines are so far "topical" that we may be sure they were inserted in the winter of 1714–15. Pope was writing of what he saw and heard when he described the—

> Astrologers, that future fates foreshow,
> Projectors, quacks, and lawyers not a few;
> And priests and party-zealots, numerous bands,
> With home-born lies, or tales from foreign lands;
> Each talked aloud, or in some secret place,
> And wild impatience stared in every face.
> The flying rumours gathered as they rolled;
> Scarce any tale was sooner heard than told;
> And all who told it added something new,
> And all who heard it made enlargements too;
> In ev'ry ear it spread, on every tongue it grew.

As usual, Pope could not resist the temptation to introduce an allusion to himself and his own virtues at the close, but in this case he was only enlarging upon a hint of Chaucer's. In the character of the poet who sees the vision of the Temple of Fame, he dreams that he is asked whether he too is a candidate for celebrity, and replies:

> 'Tis true, said I, not void of hopes I came,
> For who so fond as youthful bards of fame?
> But few, alas! the casual blessing boast,
> So hard to gain, so easy to be lost.

How vain that second life in others' breath,
Th' estate which wits inherit after death!

. . . . . .

Nor Fame I slight, nor for her favours call;
She comes unlooked-for, if she comes at all
But if the purchase cost so dear a price,
As soothing folly, or exalting vice;
Oh! if the Muse must flatter lawless sway,
And follow still where Fortune leads the way;
Or if no basis bear my rising name
But the fall'n ruins of another's fame;
Then teach me, Heaven, to scorn the guilty bays;
Drive from my breast that wretched love of praise;
Unblemished let me live, or die unknown,
Oh! grant an honest fame, or grant me none!

CHAPTER XV

1715

"The What-d'ye-call't?"—Burnet's "Homerides"—The First Volume of the "Iliad"

AT a period when the drama was the passion of the English nation, when the playhouse was the popular resort of the people, and when the loves and squabbles of actors and managers were regarded as matters of public interest, it is somewhat strange that the most fashionable poet of his day should not have been attracted by the theatre—its instant fame and rich rewards. But Pope, as we have seen, dreaded the domination of the players, and dreaded perhaps even more the drastic verdicts of the mob. He was only interested in the theatre as he was interested in politics, through his friends, and his one feeble dramatic venture was made under the cover of another's name.

In February, 1715, Gay made a decided hit with his tragi-comi-pastoral farce, *The What-d'ye-call't?* which, though it amused the town, enraged some of the critics by reason of its parodies of certain famous passages in the tragedies of Shakespeare, Dryden, and Rowe. It was generally believed that Pope and Swift had helped in the composition of the farce, one couplet at least—a piece of advice

from a father to a daughter—being thought to show the hand that wrote "The Rape of the Lock."

> Mark my last words—an honest living get;
> Beware of Papishes, and learn to knit.

On March 3 Pope and Gay wrote a joint letter to Caryll, in which they describe the reception of the piece:

"The farce has occasioned many different speculations in the town. Some looked upon it as a mere jest upon the tragic poets, others as a satire on the late war. Mr. Cromwell, hearing none of the words, and seeing the action to be tragical, was much astonished to find the audience laugh, and says the prince and princess must be under no less amazement on the same account. Several Templars, and others of the more vociferous kind of critics, went with a resolution to hiss, and confessed they were forced to laugh so much that they forgot the design they came with. The Court in general has in a very particular manner come into the jest, and the three first nights—notwithstanding two of them were Court nights—were distinguished by very full audiences of the first quality. The common people of the pit and gallery received it at first with great gravity and sedateness, some few with tears, but after the third day they also took the hint, and have ever since been loud in their claps." [1]

In a later letter Gay complains of a sixpenny

[1] Gay's piece would now be described as a kind of burlesque melodrama, and it may still be read with amusement. In "Roxana," the first of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's "Court Poems," the prudish heroine (the Duchess of Roxburgh) explains that to curry favour with the Princess of Wales she forgot her

criticism lately published upon the tragedy of *The What-d'ye-call't?* wherein the author, with much judgment, calls him a blockhead, and Mr. Pope a knave.[1] The critic's particular objection was to the parodies of *Cato*, which he declared that Gay had injudiciously and profanely abused. Steele appears to have been of the same opinion, for he said that if he had been in town the farce should never have appeared. Pope, too, had been afflicted, to use Gay's phrase, with a distemper which proves mortal to many poets—a criticism. "Mr. Thomas Burnet," writes Gay, "hath played the precursor to the coming of Homer, in a treatise called 'Homerides.' He has since risen very much in his criticisms, and, after assaulting Homer, made a daring attack upon *The What-d'ye-call't?*[2] Yet is there not a proclamation issued for the burning of Homer and the Pope by the common hangman, nor is *The What-d'ye-call't?* yet silenced by the Lord Chamberlain. They shall survive the conflagration of his father's works, and live after his father is damned; for that the Bishop Salisbury already is so in the opinion of Dr. Sacheverell and the Church of Rome."[3]

principles and missed her prayers to get dressed by noon, whereas formerly—

> Sermons I sought, and with a mien severe
> Censured my neighbours, and said daily prayer.
> Alas! how changed—with the same serious mien
> That once I prayed, *The What-d'ye-call't?* I've seen.

[1] This "Key to *The What-d'ye-call't?*" was attributed to Gerald Griffin, an actor; but it is not improbable that Pope and Gay were the actual authors, knowing full well the commercial value of an abusive criticism.

[2] In a periodical paper called *The Grumbler*.

[3] Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, died on March 17, 1715.

Burnet's[1] "Homerides; or, a letter to Mr. Pope, occasioned by his intended translation of Homer; by Sir Iliad Doggrel," is a good-humoured, but quite undistinguished, piece of chaff. Burnet taunts the poet with having undertaken single-handed what all the poets of England dared not jointly attempt. It was too late to dissuade him from his mad project, because "not only your intending subscribers, whose expectations have been raised in proportion to what their pockets have been drained of, but even the industrious, foolish Bernard [Lintot], who has advanced no small sum of money for the copy, require the performance of your articles." All that Sir Iliad can now do is to render assistance in the gigantic task. There are, he points out, two things to be considered in the execution of every heroic poem—first, how to write the poem, and secondly how to make it sell. The second being by far the most important, he offers to apply to Robin Powel, the puppet-showman, "and I doubt not at my request he will be persuaded to convert the whole history of the siege of Troy into a puppet-show." Further, a book of the Proposals for Subscribers should lie open in Mr. Powel's great room at Bath, so that after each performance the audience might be taken in to sign before they had time to cool. The skit concludes with some scraps of burlesque verse, which are intended as specimens of the style in which the translation should be rendered.

The joint letters written by Pope and Gay to

[1] Thomas Burnet, third son of the bishop. He was a wit and a profligate in his youth. In later life he became a judge of the Court of Common Pleas, and was knighted.

Caryll are much more lively, and contain far more news and gossip than the more laboured compositions written by Pope alone. To the chattering pen of the author of "The Trivia" we owe our knowledge of such little intimate details as that—"Mr. Gay expects a present from the princess; we are invited this day to a dinner at my Lord Lansdowne's; we are invited to see the lions at the Tower gratis, by a lord who expects to have a new lodging given him by Parliament. . . ."[1] That was in March. In April we learn that "Mr. Pope is going to Mr. Jervas's, where Mr. Addison is sitting for his picture. In the meantime, amidst clouds of tobacco at Williams's Coffee-house, I write this letter. We have agreed to spend this day in visits. He is to introduce me to a lord and two ladies, and on my part—which I think will balance his visits—I am to present him to a duchess. There is a grand revolution at Will's Coffee-house. Morrice has quitted for a coffee-house in the city, and Titcombe is restored, to the great joy of Cromwell, who was at a great loss for a person to converse with upon the Fathers and church history. The knowledge I gain from him is entirely in painting and poetry; and Mr. Pope owes all his skill in astronomy, and particularly in the revolution of eclipses, to him and Mr. Whiston, so celebrated of late for his discovery of the longitude in an extraordinary copy of verses, which you heard when you were last in town. . . .[2]

[1] Lord Oxford, who was expecting to be impeached for his conduct as a minister of the late Government.

[2] A coarse and foolish "Ode on the Longitude," written by Gay to ridicule Whiston's "New Method of discovering the Longitude

Mr. Pope's Homer is retarded by the great rains that have fallen of late, which caused the sheets to be long a-drying. This gives Mr. Pope great uneasiness, who is now endeavouring to corrupt the curate of his parish to pray for fair weather that his work may go on the faster." [1]

The two friends promise themselves the pleasure of a visit to Ladyholt, but Pope stipulates that he is to have his mornings to himself. "For my part," concludes Gay, "who do not deal in heroes or ravished ladies, I may perhaps celebrate a milkmaid, describe the amours of your parson's daughter, or write an elegy upon the death of a hare; but my articles are quite the reverse of his—that you will interrupt me every morning, or ten to one I shall first be troublesome, and interrupt you." In a postscript to the letter Pope complains that Gay has forestalled all the subjects of raillery and diversion, "unless it should be to tell you that I sit up till one or two o'clock every night over Burgundy and Champagne, and am become so much a modern rake that I shall be ashamed in a short time to be thought to do any sort of business. I must get the gout by drinking, as above said, purely for a fashionable pretence to sit still long enough to translate four books of Homer."

The first volume of the "Iliad," a heavy, important-looking quarto, padded out with portrait, preface,

by Signals" (1714). Gay's "Ode" appeared in Pope's and Swift's "Miscellanies."

[1] In the edition of 1735 these joint letters from Pope and Gay are printed as addressed to Congreve.

introduction, maps, and notes, was delivered to subscribers on June 6, but the issue to the general public was delayed because Lintot was busy printing the Report of "the Committee of Secrecy," which had been appointed to inquire into the conduct of the late Government. Meanwhile, Tickell's translation of the first book of the "Iliad" made its most inopportune appearance.[1] Pope had, of course, been warned by Addison that this work was in preparation, and had replied that Tickell had as much right to translate Homer as himself. Now, however, he seems to have imagined that Tickell had been inspired by Addison to put forth a rival translation, and later he persuaded himself, or was persuaded by others, that Addison was the actual author of the work. On June 10 Bernard Lintot wrote to Pope in his laconic style:

"Sir,

"You have Mr. Tickell's book to divert one hour. It is already condemned here, and the malice and juggle at Button's is the conversation of those who have spare moments from politics. . . . Pray detain me not from publishing my own book, having delivered the greatest part of the subscribers already —upwards of four hundred. I design to publish Monday sevennight. Pray interrupt me not by an

[1] Thomas Tickell (1686-1740). He was appointed Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1711, and in 1712 brought out his "Prospect of Peace," a poem that was much admired by Pope. He was an intimate friend of Addison's, and had been employed by him in public work. He wrote a fine "Elegy on the Death of Addison," and edited his works. His translation of the first book of the "Iliad" was put forth ostensibly to bespeak the public favour for a translation of the "Odyssey," which he had in hand.

errata [*sic*]. I doubt not the sale of Homer, if you do not disappoint me by delaying publication."

The publication was delayed, but not by the author. On June 22 Lintot wrote again that the hurry he has been in to get the Report from the Committee of Secrecy published has prevented the publication of Homer for the present, and adds: "Those whom I expected to be very noisy on account of your translation are buried in politics. . . . The Duke of Ormonde[1] is to be impeached for high treason, and Earl of St[rafford][2] for high crimes and misdemeanours."

Oxford and Bolingbroke had been impeached in the House of Lords on June 10. Bolingbroke fled to France, where he offered his services to the Pretender, while Oxford, with quiet courage, awaited his fate at home. On July 9 he found the long-expected lodging in the Tower. Pope sent an early copy of his work to Swift at Dublin, and reproached him for his long silence. Swift replied in melancholy vein:

"You talk at your ease, being wholly unconcerned in public events, for if your friends the Whigs continue, you may hope for some favour; if the Tories return, you are, at least, sure of quiet. You know how well I loved both Lord Oxford and Bolingbroke, and how dear the Duke of Ormonde is to me. Do you imagine I can be easy while their

[1] James, second Duke of Ormonde (1665–1745). He was impeached on June 21, and retired to France on August 8. He was attainted and his estates forfeited. He afterwards tried to stir up a Jacobite rising in the West.

[2] Thomas, third Earl of Strafford. The proceedings against him were dropped.

enemies are endeavouring to take off their heads? . . . . I borrowed your Homer from the bishop —mine is not yet landed—and read it out in two evenings. If it pleases others as well as me, you have got your end in profit and reputation; yet I am angry at some bad rhymes and triplets, and pray, in your next, do not let me have so many unjustifiable rhymes to *war* and *gods*. I tell you all the faults I know—only, in one or two places, you are a little obscure, but I expected you to be so in one or two and twenty."

The first volume of the Homer was received with a chorus of praise from friends and critics, the echoes of which resounded through the century. In his Preface Pope says: "Upon the whole I must confess myself utterly incapable of doing justice to Homer. I attempt him in no other hope but that which one may entertain, without much vanity, of giving a more tolerable copy of him than any entire translation in verse has yet done." He records the names of all the distinguished persons who had encouraged him in the work, including those of Oxford and Bolingbroke,[1] and adds that he fears no judges so little as the best poets, who are most sensible of the weight of the task. "As for the worst, whatever they shall please to say, they may give me some concern as they are unhappy men, but none as they are malignant writers."[2]

"I have just set down Sir Samuel Garth at the Opera," Gay writes to Pope on July 9. "He bid

[1] Swift thought this a proof of great courage.

[2] It was characteristic of Pope to assume that hostile critics were necessarily unhappy men and malignant writers.

me tell you that everybody is pleased with your translation except a few at Button's, and that Sir Richard Steele told him that Addison said Tickell's translation was the best that ever was in any language. . . . I am informed that at Button's your character is made very free with as to morals, etc., and Mr. A[ddison] says that your translation and Tickell's are both very well done, but the latter has more of Homer."

It was generally agreed, however, that Tickell was fairly beaten off the field by Pope. Jervas declared that he could have made a more poetical version than Tickell's in a fortnight, and Parnell tells Pope: "I have just seen the first book of Homer, which came out at a time when it could not but appear as a kind of setting up against you. My opinion is that you may, if you please, give them thanks who wrote it."

Old Bentley growled out that Pope's version was "a very pretty poem, but not Homer";[1] while Dennis put a rod in pickle against the appearance of the later volumes. The fashionable world, however, acclaimed the work as though it had been a scandalous memoir or a new French romance, and the curious spectacle might be seen of beaux and belles devouring Homer in coffee-houses and boudoirs. It was declared that Pope had found the "Iliad" brickwork and left it marble, and this was considered the highest praise. In our own day we

[1] This was probably repeated to Pope, who did his best to get even with the Master of Trinity by means of attacks in "The Dunciad" and "Imitations of Horace." Bentley never made any public retort. He contented himself with the contemptuous remark, "The portentous cub never forgives."

Pope's version runs :

The monarch issued his commands ;
Strait the loud heralds call the gathering bands.
The chiefs enclose their king; the hosts divide,
In tribes and nations ranked on every side.
High in the midst the blue-eyed Virgin flies ;
From rank to rank she darts her ardent eyes:
The dreadful Ægis, Jove's immortal shield,
Blazed on her arm and lightened all the field :
Round the vast orb an hundred serpents rolled,
Formed the bright fringe, and seemed to burn in gold.
With this each Grecian's manly breast she warms,
Swells their bold hearts, and strings their nervous arms.

. . . .

With rushing troops the plains are covered o'er
And thundering footsteps shake the sounding shore :
Along the river's level meads they stand,
Thick as in spring the flowers adorn the land,
Or leaves the trees; or thick as insects play,
The wandering nation of a summer's day,[1]
That, drawn by milky steams, at evening hours,
In gathered swarms surround the rural bowers;
From pail to pail with busy murmur run
The gilded legions, glitt'ring in the sun.
So thronged, so close, the Grecian squadrons stood
In radiant arms, and thirst for Trojan blood.

It may not be uninteresting to compare a late nineteenth-century rendering of the same passage with the above. In 1891 Mr. Arthur Way published a translation of the "Iliad" in rhyming

[1] This line is "very pretty," but more suited to a piece like "The Rape of the Lock" than to a great epic. Pope would not stoop to the mention of flies any more than of fish, or of an ass, which, in his translation, becomes "The slow beast with heavy strength endued."

anapæstic hexameters, from which the following is quoted :

And the saying pleased Agamemnon, the lord of a warrior folk.
To the heralds with voice clear-pealing, his host forthright he spoke.
To call to the battle-toil the Achaians with long-flowing hair.
And they made proclamation, and swiftly the war-folk gathered there.
And the heaven-fostered kings by the son of Atreus' side
Sped swiftly arraying the host, and Athene the flashing-eyed
Was there with her glorious immortal Ægis that waxeth not old;
Danced they and streamed on the wind, its hundred tassels of gold,
All lovely-twisted, and each was the worth of a hundred kine;
Flashing, it sped adown the Achaian battle line,
And ever she spurred them on, and she filled each heart with might,
And she made them fain of the onset, afire for the stintless fight.

. . . . . .

So from the tents and the galleys came on nation on nation of men—
Pouring forth to the plain of Scamander, and ever the deep earth under
With the tramp of the ranks and the stamping of steeds rang terrible thunder.
In the mead of Scamander they halted, the green mead starred with flowers,
Countless as leaves or as blossoms that wake under spring-tide showers.
Even as the multitudinous flies in swarms untold,
That are wheeling and dancing in spring evermore round byre and fold,
When the milk in the pail foams up, and the bubbles are bright at their brim,
So swarmed in the plain the Achaian long-haired warriors grim,
Furious, fain to be rending the Trojans limb from limb.

CHAPTER XVI

1715

"Farewell to London"—Satire on Addison—The War-like Spirit—Visit to Bath

IN his relief at feeling that the first portion of his gigantic task was successfully accomplished, Pope thought himself entitled to a little extra indulgence. For a few weeks he led a gay life about town with wits like Gay and Arbuthnot, or wild young lordlings such as Warwick and Hinchinbroke. His health would not stand a prolonged bout of dissipation, and he was glad to retire to peaceful Binfield. Before leaving town he wrote a "Farewell to London," from which a few stanzas may be quoted:

> Farewell, Arbuthnot's raillery
>   On every learnèd sot;
> And Garth, the best good Christian he,
>   Although he knows it not.
>
> . . . .
>
> Why should I stay? Both parties rage;
>   My vixen mistress squalls;
> The wits in envious feuds engage:
>   And Homer (damn him!) calls.

The love of arts lies cold and dead
In Halifax's urn:[1]
And not one Muse of all he fed
Has yet the grace to mourn.

. . . .

Still idle, with a busy air,
Deep whimsies to contrive;
The gayest valetudinaire,
Most thinking rake, alive.

Solicitous for others' ends,
Though fond of dear repose;
Careless or drowsy with my friends,
And frolic with my foes.

Luxurious lobster nights, farewell,
For sober, studious days!
And Burlington's[2] delicious meal
For salads, tarts, and pease.

Adieu to all but Gay alone,
Whose soul, sincere and free,
Loves all mankind, but flatters none,[3]
And so may starve with me.

Pope had now thoroughly persuaded himself that Addison was his bitter enemy, and was endeavouring to ruin his reputation, literary and moral. For July 15 there is a letter addressed by Pope to his friend James Craggs,[4] now Secretary of State, which

[1] Halifax had died on May 19 of this year.

[2] Richard Boyle, third Earl of Burlington (1695–1753), commonly known as the "Architect Earl." He was appointed Lord High Treasurer of Ireland in this year. He partly rebuilt Burlington House in 1716, and was a munificent patron of Kent, the painter-architect.

[3] This was not correct. Gay was willing enough to flatter any one if he could be well with the court.

[4] James Craggs the Younger (1686–1721). He was a favourite of George I., and in 1718 was made Secretary of State. He was supposed to be the lover of the Countess Platen, and was mixed up with the scandals relating to the South Sea Bubble.

gives a curious account of literary society in general, and Addison's behaviour in particular.[1]

"The spirit of dissension," he complains, "is gone forth among us; nor is it a wonder that Button's is no longer Button's, when old England is no longer old England, that region of hospitality, society and good humour. Party affects us all, even the wits, though they gain as little by politics as they do by their wit. We talk much of fine sense, refined sense, and exalted sense; but for use and happiness give me a little common sense. I say this in regard to some gentlemen, professed wits of our acquaintance, who fancy they can make poetry of consequence at this time of day, in the midst of their aging fit of politics. For they tell me the busy part of the nation are not more divided about Whig and Tory than these idle fellows of the feather about Mr. T[ickell]'s and my translation. I (like the Tories) have the town in general, that is, the mob, on my side; but it is usual with the smaller party to make up in industry what they want in number, and that is the case with the little senate of *Cato*. However, if our principles be well considered, I must appear a brave Whig and Mr. T. a rank Tory: I translated Homer for the public in general, he to gratify the inordinate desires of one man only. We have, it seems, a great Turk in poetry, who can never bear a brother on the throne; and he has his mutes too—a set of nodders, winkers, and whisperers, whose business is to strangle all other offsprings of wit in their birth.

[1] This letter must be accepted with caution. Craggs was a great friend of Addison's, and the part relating to the great Turk of poetry is probably spurious.

The new translator of Homer is the humblest slave he has, that is to say, his first minister; let them receive the honours he gives me, but receive them with fear and trembling; let him be proud of the approbation of his absolute Lord. I appeal to the people, as my rightful judges and masters; and if they are not inclined to condemn me, I fear no arbitrary, high-flying proceeding from the small court-faction at Button's. But, after all I have said of this great man, there is no rupture between us. We are each of us so civil and obliging that neither thinks he is obliged: and I, for my part, treat with him as we do with the grand monarch; who has too many great qualities not to be respected, though we know he watches any occasion to oppress us."

Pope declared that Lord Warwick[1] had told him it was vain for him to attempt to stand well with Addison, whose jealous temper would admit of no friendship with a rival. Addison, according to the same authority, had encouraged Philips to abuse Pope, and paid Gildon to publish scandals about him. "The day after receiving this information," relates Pope, "while I was heated with what I had heard, I wrote a letter to Mr. Addison to let him know that I was not unacquainted with this behaviour of his; that if I was to speak severely of him in return for it, it should not be in such a dirty way; that I should rather tell him fairly of his faults, and allow his good qualities, and that it should be something in the following manner: I then subjoined the

[1] This young Lord Warwick was the son of the widowed Countess of Warwick whom Addison married in 1716.

first sketch of what has been called my satire on Addison. He used me very civilly ever after; and never did me any injustice that I know of from that time to his death, which was about three years after."[1]

The above story was probably fictitious, but Pope was especially anxious to prove that the "Character of Atticus," by which title the famous satire on Addison is generally known, was written before his enemy's death. It was first published in a volume of "Miscellanies" in 1723,[2] and Pope was accused of having

[1] Related by Spence. Ayre, in his "Memoir of Pope," gives another version of the story, which was to the effect that Pope had an interview with Addison at which Gay was also present. Pope is represented as having appealed to Addison to treat him in a candid and friendly manner, and tell him how he had offended. Addison replied in a formal speech, in which he advised Pope to divest himself of some of his vanity, as he had not reached to that pitch of excellence he might imagine, and reminded him that when he—Addison—and Steele corrected his verses, they had a very different air. He proceeded to lay before him all his mistakes and inaccuracies, and, speaking of Homer, said Pope was not to blame in attempting it, since he was to get so much money by it; but it was an ill-executed thing, and not equal to Tickell's. Pope replied that he did not esteem Addison able to correct him, and that he had known him too long to expect any friendship; upbraided him with being a pensioner from his youth, sacrificing the very learning that was purchased with the public money to a mean thirst for power; that he was sent abroad to encourage literature, and had always endeavoured to cuff down new merit. "At last the contest grew so warm that they parted without any ceremony, and Mr. Pope immediately wrote those verses which are not thought by all to be a very false character of Mr. Addison."

[2] "Cythereia; or, New Poems upon Love, Intrigue, etc.," printed for E. Curll and T. Payne. "The Character" was afterwards printed in the "Miscellanies" brought out by Pope and Swift (1727), and again, in a revised form, in "The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" (1734).

waited to attack Addison until he was no longer able to defend himself. Hence the story to Spence, and the publication, in the correspondence, of the probably apocryphal letter to Craggs. The "Character of Atticus" has rightly been adjudged the finest and most finished of all Pope's compositions in this *genre*. Its effect is due partly to the fact that, for once, he keeps his temper and frankly admits the virtues of his victim at the same time that he lays bare his petty faults. This judicial blame, mingled with warm praise, was, of course, a thousand times more damaging than the most violent abuse of Dennis and his school. Since this famous fragment was certainly inspired about the time we have now reached, whatever the actual date of its composition, it may best be quoted here. It will be remembered that, after a contemptuous illusion to the Grub Street hacks, the poet exclaims:

> Peace to all such! but were there one whose fires
> True genius kindles, and fair fame inspires;
> Blest with each talent, and each art to please,
> And born to write, converse, and live with ease:
> Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
> Bear like the Turk, no brother near the throne,
> View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
> And hate for arts that caused himself to rise;
> Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,[1]
> And, without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
> Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
> Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;
> Alike reserved to blame, or to commend,
> A timorous foe, and a suspicious friend;

[1] Imitated from a line of Wycherley's in *The Plain Dealer*:
"And with faint praises one another damn."

Dreading e'en fools, by flatterers besieged,
And so obliging, that he ne'er obliged;[1]
Like Cato, give his little senate laws,
And sit attentive to his own applause;
While wits and Templars every sentence raise,
And wonder with a foolish face of praise—
Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?
Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?[2]

The flirtation with the ladies of Mapledurham languished when "Homer (damn him!)" called, but revived again when the translator allowed himself a rare interval of leisure. In June he had told Patty Blount that he was studying to forget every creature he had ever loved or esteemed. "I am concerned for nothing in the world," he declares, "but the life of one or two who are to be impeached,[3] and the health of a lady that has been sick;[4] I am to be entertained only with that jade whom everybody thinks I love as my mistress, but whom in reality I hate as a wife—my Muse."

[1] In the early version the following couplet was inserted before the Cato line:

Who, when two wits on rival themes contest,
Approves them both, but likes the worst the best.

This, of course, was an allusion to the rivalry between Pope and Tickell.

[2] If Pope really showed "The Atticus Character" to Addison in 1715, the latter showed great magnanimity in praising Pope's version of the "Iliad" in his paper, *The Freeholder*, May 7, 1716. After expressing his approval of the labours of those who have translated the classic authors, Addison continues: "The illiterate among our countrymen may learn to judge from Dryden's Virgil of the most perfect epic performance; and those parts of Homer which have already been published by Mr. Pope give us reason to think that the 'Iliad' will appear in English with as little disadvantage to that immortal composition."

[3] Oxford and Bolingbroke.

[4] Possibly Lady Masham.

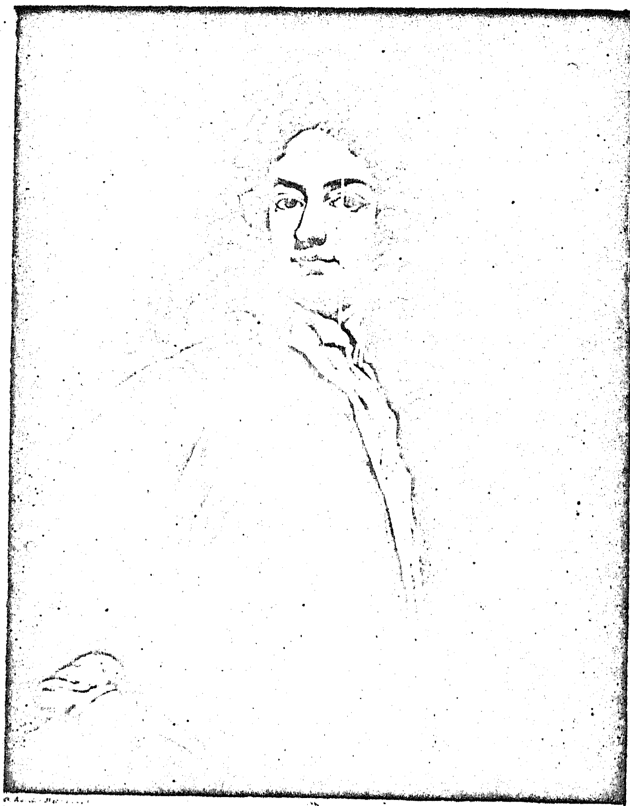
There must have been some little quarrel between the sisters and their poetical squire, for in July Pope sends them a couple of painted fans, which he had ordered from Jervas, as a peace-offering. But it was no uncommon thing for little presents to be exchanged between the two families. Some one sends Pope two bottles of white elder-wine, "which," he says, "looks like the trick of a kind, hearty, motherly gentlewoman, and therefore I believe I owe it to Mrs. Blount." In return, perhaps, he sent the ladies some ripe fruit from Mr. Dancastle's garden, wrapped in the only copy extant of one portion of Homer. No wonder that he urgently begged the wrappings might be returned.[1]

Before he left town Pope wrote a long letter to his favourite, Teresa, in answer to her oft-repeated request for "news." It is not a sign that two lovers are together, he complains, when they can be so impertinent as to inquire what the world does, and if she did not think him the meanest creature in the world she would never imagine that a poet could dwindle to a brother of Dawks and Dyer,[2] from a rival of Tate and Brady. The chief topic of the day is the splendid behaviour of Lord Oxford under his late reverses. "The utmost weight of affliction from ministerial power and popular hatred were almost worth bearing for the glory of such a dauntless conduct as he has shown under it." Meanwhile, rumours of war were in the air. The clans were

[1] Swift alludes to "paper-sparing Pope," and says that the backs of his letters

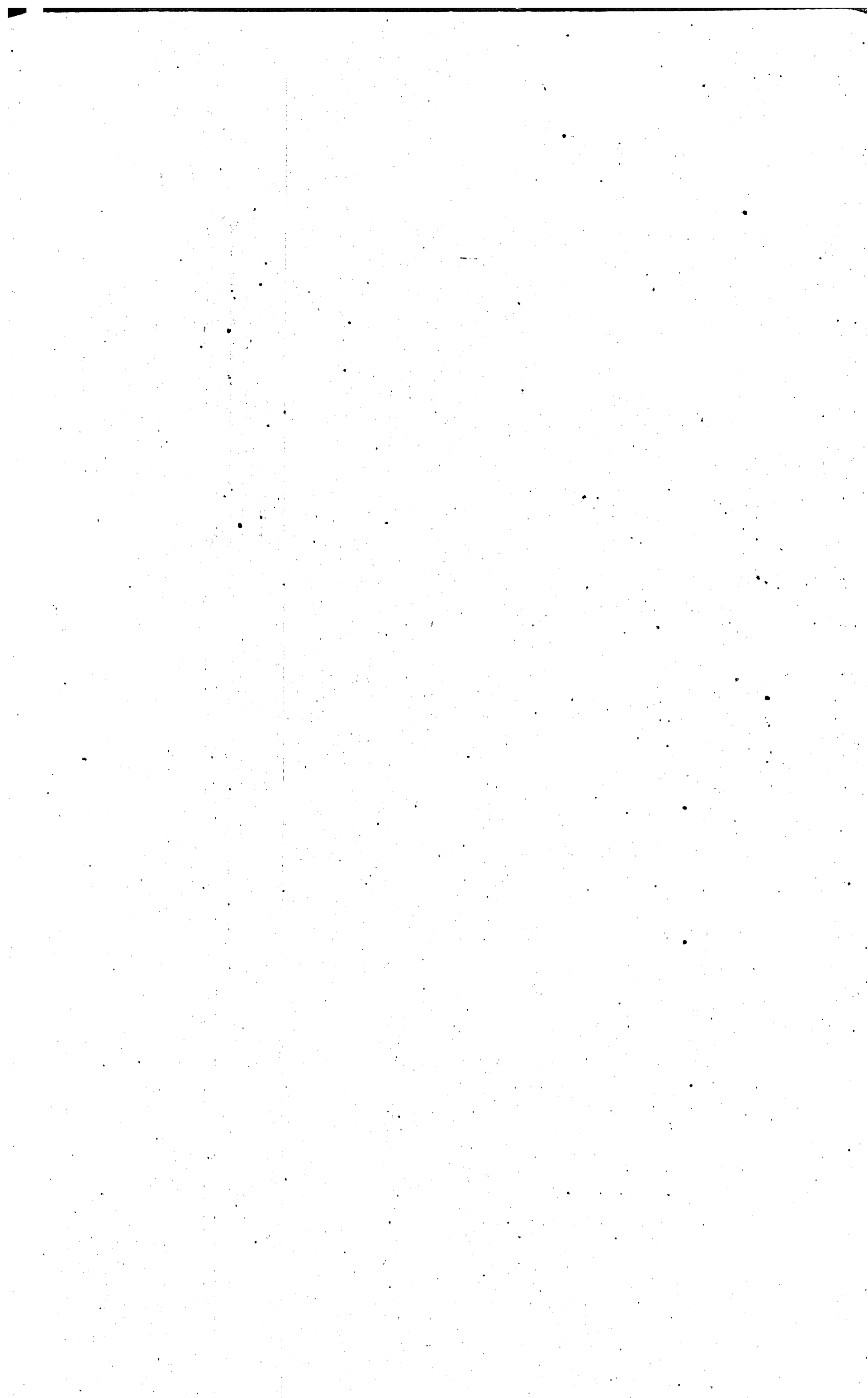
> Are filled with hints and interlined,
> Himself can scarcely read 'em.

[2] Well-known writers of public news-letters.



From a mezzotint engraving by J. Faber, 1733, after the painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller.

JOSEPH ADDISON.



gathering in the North, and the high-spirited Teresa might soon enjoy the sight of armies and encampments, standards waving over her brother's cornfields, and the windings of the Thames stained with blood.

Towards the end of July Pope was planning a visit to Bath, and he had persuaded Jervas, Arbuthnot, and "Duke" Disney[1] to bear him company on the journey. Jervas, who was personally to conduct the party, found many difficulties in his way. Fine ladies insisted on coming to be painted, Arbuthnot's patients refused to get well, and the weather was unsuitable for a long expedition on horseback, being as uncertain as the political conditions or the public health. At length, on August 12, he was able to write to Pope :

"I could not have failed by Tuesday's post, but that the doctor could not be positive as to the time, but yesterday we met on horseback, and took two or three turns near the camp,[2] partly to see my new horse's goings, and partly to name something like the day of setting forth, and the manner thereof, viz. : that on Thursday next (18th), God willing, Dr. A., D. Disney, and C. Jervas, rendezvous at Hyde Park Corner about noon, and proceed to Mr. Hill's, at Egham, to lodge there. Friday to meet Mr. Pope upon the road, to proceed

[1] Colonel Disney, described by Swift as "a fellow of abundance of humour, an old battered rake, but very honest." He was nicknamed "Duke" Disney. The wits all loved him, but Lady M. W. Montagu describes in unflattering terms "Duke Disney's grin," and his—

> Broad, plump face, pert eyes and ruddy skin,
> Which showed the stupid joke that lurked within.

[2] The fear of a Jacobite rising had induced the authorities to establish a large camp in Hyde Park.

together to Lord Stawell's,[1] therealso to lodge. The next day, Saturday, to Sir William Wyndham's, and to rest there the Lord's Day. On Monday forward again toward Bath or Wilton, or as we shall then agree. The doctor proposes that himself or his man ride my spare horse, and that I leave all equipage to be sent to Bath by the carrier with your portmanteau. The doctor says he will allow none of us so much as a nightgown or slippers for the road—so a shirt and a cravat in your pocket is all you must think of for this new scheme."

Pope spent a couple of months with his friends at Bath, returning to Binfield about the middle of October. He seems to have dropped his correspondence during his holiday, and we only get a glimpse of him and of Bath at this season in the letters of Montagu Bacon.[2] Writing to his cousin, James Montagu, on September 14, Bacon says:

"I arrived here on Saturday night and began yesterday to take the waters. . . . There is a great deal of company here. There are balls and plays and all sorts of playing. They do not forget their politics in the midst of their waters. The Tories, who are the majority, thought fit to bring up a custom of going without swords, which we Whigs, knowing ourselves to be outnumbered, can by no

[1] Lord Stawell lived at Aldermaston.

[2] Montagu Bacon was a first cousin of Wortley Montagu's, and a son of Nicholas Bacon of Shrubland Hall, Coddenham, Suffolk. He was generally in bad health, but he wrote amusing letters, and annotated "Hudibras." In middle life he took orders, but his mind gave way, and he died in a private asylum. He corresponded regularly at this time with his cousin, James Montagu, to whom he sent the gossip of the town and the Bath.

means submit to, so we are distinguished by that. I am lodged in the house with two or three very pretty ladies. One of them is a great acquaintance of my sister, so you may be sure I do not neglect the opportunity. Mr. Wycherley and Mr. Pope are here too. . . ."[1]

The whole of the West of England was disaffected, thanks to the efforts of Lord Lansdowne and the Duke of Ormonde, so that after the Rebellion had broken out in the North Bath was not a very desirable place of residence for a staunch Whig. Indeed, on October 17, Bacon writes: "We were in great danger here before the soldiers came down, and really showed great magnanimity in daring to stay. I hope, since the king has so many valiant friends, he will soon see his desire upon his enemies."

Pope, as an intimate friend of the late Tory leaders, would have been in no danger, even had an insurrection broken out in the West, but he was already safe in his retreat at Binfield. On October 11 he wrote thence to Caryll that he proposed to try his fortune in London a fortnight later. His next volume would then be put to press, and, as it consisted entirely of battles, it might perhaps agree with a martial age. He is weary of translating, weary of poetry, and even weary of prose, thanks to the notes.

The allusions to the Jacobite rising in the letters of this period are few, and those few are vaguely worded. This, no doubt, was partly due to prudence,

[1] Pope and Wycherley had made up their differences, though they were never again on a footing of very intimate friendship.

but even more, perhaps, to Pope's lack of interest in public affairs, except as they affected his comfort, his safety, or his literary projects. The laws against Roman Catholics were now to be more stringently enforced, while the nation was too keenly interested in the battles of Preston and Sheriffmuir to bestow much attention upon the siege of Troy. Something of the excitement and agitation of the day found its way into a letter addressed by Pope to Caryll when he was in London in November. He explains that he has been in a "wild, distracted, amused, hurried state," both of mind and body, ever since he came to town. His condition is really deserving of pity, considering how people of his turn love quiet, and how much his present studies require ease. "In a word, this world and I agree as ill as my soul and body, my appetites and constitution, my books and business. So that I am more splenetic than ever you knew me—concerned for others, out of humour with myself, fearful of some things, wearied with all. . . . This town is in so prodigious a ferment of politics that I, who never meddle in any, am absolutely incapable of all conversation in it."

Pope was still in town on December 16 (just ten days before the Pretender landed at Peterhead), when he wrote to congratulate old Sir William Trumbull on his resolution to remain in his "cave in the forest" that winter, "preferring the noise of breaking ice to that of breaking statesmen, the rage of storms to that of parties, the fury and ravage of floods and tempests to the precipitancy of some and ruin of others, which, I fear, will be our

daily prospect in London. . . . I never had so much cause as now to complain of my poetical star that fixes me, at this tumultuous time, to attend the jingling of rhymes and the measuring of syllables; to be almost the only trifler in the nation, and as ridiculous as the poet in Petronius, who, while all the rest in the ship were either labouring or praying for life, was scratching his head in a little room, to write a fine description of the tempest."

CHAPTER XVII

1716

The Move to Chiswick—Lady Mary Wortley Montagu—Curll and the Court Poems—"Epistle to Jervas"—Parody of the First Psalm

WYCHERLEY died on January 1, 1716, aged seventy-five, and on January 21 Pope, who had attended at his old friend's bedside, gives the following curious account of the last hours of the brilliant, wayward dramatist:[1]

"He had often told me, as I doubt not he did all his acquaintance, that he would marry as soon as life was despaired of. Accordingly, a few days before his death, he underwent the ceremony, and joined those two sacraments, which, wise men say, should be the last we should receive; for, if you observe, matrimony is placed after extreme unction in our catechism, as a kind of hint of the order of time in which they are to be taken. The old man then lay down, satisfied in the conscience of having by this one act paid his just debts, obliged a woman who, he was told, had merit, and shown an heroic resentment of the ill-usage of his next heir. Some hundred

[1] In a letter to Mr. Edward Blount, of Blagdon.

pounds which he had with the lady discharged those debts; a jointure of four hundred a year made her a recompense, and the nephew he left to comfort himself as well as he could with the miserable remains of a mortgaged estate. I saw our friend twice after this was done, less peevish in his sickness than he used to be in his health; neither much afraid of dying, nor, which in him had been more likely, much ashamed of marrying. The evening before he expired he called his young wife to the bedside, and earnestly entreated her not to deny him one request, the last he should make. Upon her assurances of consenting to it, he told her: 'My dear, it is only this: that you will never marry an old man again.' I cannot help remarking that sickness, which often destroys both wit and wisdom, yet seldom has power to remove that talent which we call humour. Mr. Wycherley showed his, even in this last compliment, though I think his request a little hard; for why should he bar her from doubling her jointure on the same easy terms?"

The quiet, simple life at Binfield, and the society of the honest country neighbours, whose friendship he had once been proud to gain, could no longer satisfy the successful poet. In the early part of this year Pope persuaded his father to sell his little house and piece of land, and move to Chiswick, where they would be "under the wing of my Lord Burlington." This desire for change may partly be accounted for by the fact that the ladies of the Blount family had left Mapledurham. Mr. Blount the elder had died in 1710, and his son had married Miss Tichborne in the summer of 1715. The

mother and daughters, turned out of their old home, and left with but a modest income, had decided to take a small house in London. In a letter to Caryll, dated March 20, Pope says:

"I write this from Windsor Forest, which I am come to take my last look and leave of. We have bid our Papist neighbours adieu, much as those who go to be hanged do their fellow-prisoners, who are condemned to follow them a few weeks after. I was at Whiteknights when I found the young ladies I just now mentioned spoken of a little more coldly than I could, at this time especially, have wished. I parted from honest Mr. Dancastle with tenderness, and from old Sir William Trumbull as from a venerable prophet, foretelling with lifted hands the miseries to come upon posterity, which he was just going to be removed from."

Pope was full of anxiety and concern about the widowed and fatherless at Mapledurham. "As I am certain," he continues, "no people living had an earlier and truer sense of others' misfortunes, or a more generous resignation as to what might be their own, so I earnestly wish that whatever part they must bear of these may be rendered as supportable to them as it is in the power of any friend to make it. They are beforehand with us in being out of house and home by their brother's marriage; but I wish they have not some cause already to look upon Mapledurham with such sort of melancholy as we may upon our own seats when we lose them."

The new house was in a row called Mawson's New Buildings, near the landing-stage at Chiswick, which of course was not then a suburb, but a

country village within easy reach of London.[1] To be close to a landing-stage on the river was like being near a station on the District Railway to-day, and Pope could easily take a boat up to Whitehall to meet his town friends at the coffee-house, or down to the resorts made fashionable by the neighbourhood of royalty—Hampton Court, Richmond, and Twickenham. Life at Chiswick, we may guess, was not so good for his health or his work as the quiet retreat in the Forest, but he was "living his life," and enjoying all the pleasures that success could bring him. Lord Burlington was an excellent neighbour, a man of varied interests, if not of remarkable intellect, for whom Pope entertained an affectionate admiration, which found expression many years later in the famous "Epistle on the Use of Riches." On July 9 the poet wrote to Jervas, who was then in Ireland :

"My Lord Burlington desires you may be put in mind of him. His gardens flourish, his structures rise, his pictures arrive, and (what is far more valuable than all) his own good qualities daily extend themselves to all about him, whereof I, the meanest (next to some Italian chymists, fiddlers, brick-layers and opera-makers) am a living instance."

One of the most brilliant women in the London society of that day was the Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Four years earlier Lady Mary Pierrepont had eloped with Mr. Edward Wortley Montagu, a suitor who had been rejected by the

[1] Pope was rather ashamed of Mawson's Buildings, and in after-years tried to make out that he had gone straight from Binfield to Twickenham.

lady's father, Lord Dorchester,[1] on account of his refusal to make the customary marriage settlements. Wortley Montagu was a man of jealous, egoistical temperament, and during the first two years of their married life he had buried his young wife in a remote Yorkshire village. On the return of the Whigs to power Mr. Wortley was appointed one of the Commissioners of the Treasury. With considerable difficulty his wife persuaded him to allow her to join him in London, where she was soon acknowledged to be one of the most beautiful, and quite the wittiest, woman of the day.

Lord Dorchester had always affected the society of literary men, and Mr. Wortley was an intimate friend of both Addison and Steele. Lady Mary, profoundly bored by the beaux and courtiers who hovered about her, struck up a sentimental friendship with our poet, and he, dazzled by her rank and beauty, and flattered by her preference, fell a willing victim to her charms.[2] The lady had a knack of scribbling *vers de société*, which were not intended for publication, but were freely handed round among her friends. Pope read her poems, and corrected them,[3] wrote her letters in the fashion-

[1] Afterwards Duke of Kingston.

[2] Pope had made Lady Mary's acquaintance in 1715, for in a letter to Teresa Blount of that year, in which he endeavours to give some "news," he says : "I must stop here till further advices, which are expected from Lady Mary Wortley this afternoon."

[3] There was something too much of this, for Richardson, the painter, relates that on one occasion Lady Mary showed Pope a copy of her verses in which he proposed to make some trifling alterations, but she refused his help, saying, "No, Pope, no touching, for then whatever is good for anything will pass for yours, and the rest for mine."

able style of laboured gallantry, exchanged scraps of choice scandal, and thoroughly enjoyed his pseudo-Platonic flirtation.[1]

Lady Mary was the author—or part author—of some satirical verses entitled "Town Eclogues." One of these, "The Basset Table," was afterwards published among Pope's own works, while another, "The Toilette," was attributed to Gay. The lady herself claimed the whole as her own composition;[2] but, however that may be, three of the eclogues fell into the hands of Edmund Curll, the too enterprising bookseller, who published them in the spring of 1716 under the title of "Court Poems, by a Lady of Quality." In the advertisement it was stated that some good judges attributed these poems to Gay, while others gave them to the judicious translator of Homer.

On the announcement of the work, Pope sent for Curll to meet him, with Lintot, at the Swan Tavern in Fleet Street. "There," to quote Curll's account of the affair, "my brother Lintot drank his half pint of old hock, Mr. Pope his half-pint of sack, and I the same quantity of an emetic potion, but no threatenings passed. Mr. Pope said, 'Satire should not be printed,' though he has now changed

[1] Pope liked to have it insinuated that the flirtation was not altogether Platonic. Jervas writes to Pope (1715 or 1716): "Lady Mary Wortley ordered me by express this morning, *cedente Gayo et ridente Fortescuvio*, to send you a letter . . . to come to her on Thursday about five, which I suppose she meant in the evening."

[2] "The Town Eclogues" are among the contents of a manuscript volume endorsed in Lady Mary's writing:

"All the verse and prose in this book were wrote by me without the assistance of one line from any other.

"MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU."

his mind. I said, 'They should not be wrote, for if they were, they would be printed.' He replied, Mr. Gay's interest at Court would be greatly hurt by publishing these pieces. That is all that passed in our triumvirate. We then parted. Pope and my brother Lintot went together to his shop, and I went home and vomited heartily."

Pope gives his own version of the affair, in a letter, dated April 20. Among his items of news is: "A most ridiculous quarrel with a bookseller, occasioned by his having printed some satirical pieces on the Court under my name. I contrived to save the fellow a beating by giving him a vomit, the history whereof has been transmitted to posterity by a late Grub Street author." Curll's accusation against Pope of an attempt to poison him was taken seriously by Dennis, but amused the rest of the wits, and Pope brought out a pamphlet called, "A Full and True Account of a Horrid and Barbarous Revenge by Poison, on the Body of Mr. Edmund Curll, Bookseller, with a Faithful Copy of his Last Will and Testament," an offensive skit, which the poet had the strange taste to include among his prose works.

The publication of the second volume of Homer had been delayed until the martial spirit of the rebels was quelled. Pope himself was doubtful whether it was fortunate or no that he was obliged at this period (June 1716) to give up his whole time to Homer, since, without that employment, his thoughts must have turned upon what was less agreeable—the violence and madness of modern war-makers. He boasts, however, that he had become so truly a citizen of the world that he looks

with equal indifference on what he has left, and on what he has gained. "The world is such a thing as one who thinks pretty much must either laugh at or be angry with; but if we laugh at it they say we are proud, and if we are angry with it they say we are ill-natured. So the most politic way is to seem always better pleased than one can be—greater admirers, greater lovers, and in short, greater fools than we really are. So shall we live comfortably with our families, quietly with our neighbours, favoured by our masters, and happy with our mistresses."[1]

Pope's long and intimate friendship with Jervas was celebrated this summer by the publication of the charming Epistle to that artist, which was prefixed to a new edition of Dryden's translation of Du Fresnoy's "The Art of Painting." The poet begins by urging his friend to—

> Read these instructive leaves in which conspire
> Fresnoy's close art and Dryden's native fire,

and then, in autobiographical strains, reminds him how—

> Smit with the love of sister arts we came,
> And met congenial, mingling flame with flame;
> Like friendly colours, found them both unite,
> And each from each contract new strength and light.
> How oft in pleasing tasks we wear the day,
> While summer suns roll unperceived away!
> How oft our slowly-growing works impart,
> While images reflect from art to art!
> How oft review, each finding, like a friend,
> Something to blame and something to commend.

[1] Almost throughout his Correspondence Pope acts upon this principle.

Then he describes their wandering dreams of travel: how they were to see Italy together, study marbles and frescoes, and match Raphael's grace with Guido's softer air. Though Du Fresnoy had put twenty years of toil into his book, Pope points out—

> How faint by precept is expressed
> The living image in the painter's breast!

This living image is exemplified by the beautiful Lady Bridgewater, whom Jervas loved and painted. She had died of small-pox in 1714, aged only 27.

> Yet still her charms in breathing paint engage;
> Her modest cheek shall warm a future age.
> Beauty, frail flower! that every season fears,
> Blooms in thy colours for a thousand years.
> Thus Churchill's race [1] shall other hearts surprise,
> And other beauties envy Wortley's eyes; [2]
> Each pleasing Blount shall endless smiles bestow,
> And soft Belinda's blush for ever glow.[3]

Jervas painted "each pleasing Blount" about this period. In a letter to Parnell the artist says: "I have just set the last hand to a couplet, for so I may call two nymphs in one piece. They are Pope's favourites, and, though few, you will guess have cost me more pains than any nymphs can be worth. He has been so unreasonable as to expect that I should have made

[1] The four beautiful daughters of the Duke of Marlborough were Henrietta, Countess of Godolphin, afterwards Duchess of Marlborough; Anne, Countess of Sutherland; Elizabeth, Countess of Bridgewater; and Mary, Duchess of Montagu.

[2] In later editions, after the quarrel with Lady Mary, the name was changed to Worsley. Frances, wife of Sir Robert Worsley, was also celebrated for her fine eyes.

[3] Belinda was, of course, Arabella Fermor.

them as beautiful upon canvas as he has done upon paper."

In the intervals of translation Pope was working upon the poem of "Abelard and Eloisa," which was to appear in the following year. In a note to Patty Blount he says that he is studying ten hours a day, and thinking of her in spite of all the learned. "'The Epistle of Eloisa' grows warm, and begins to have some breathings of the heart in it, which may make posterity think I was in love. I can scarcely find it in my heart to leave out the conclusion I once intended for it."[1]

Less creditable was another composition belonging to the same period. This was a parody of the first Psalm, which Pope disowned both publicly and privately. "I have taken a pique against the Psalms of David," he wrote to Swift, "if the wicked may be credited, who have printed a scandalous one in my name." He put an advertisement in *The Postman*, offering three guineas for the detection of the person who had sent the parody to the press. When the publisher, a Mrs. Burleigh, stated that she possessed the original in his own writing, he thought it better to let the matter drop. There is an allusion to the affair in a note to Teresa Blount (August 7), in which Pope makes a laudable attempt to supply some "news:"

"Mr. Gay has had a fall from his horse, and broken his fine snuff-box. Your humble servant has lost his blue cloak. Mr. Edmund Curll has been exercised in a blanket, and whipped at West-

[1] The last eight lines. Pope wished Miss Blount to apply them to herself.

minster by the boys, whereof the common prints have given some account.[1] If you have seen a late advertisement, you will know that I have not told a lie (which we both abominate), but equivocated pretty genteelly. You may be confident it was not done without leave from my spiritual director."

From this we may gather that Pope had not been afraid to avow his authorship of the parody to the sisters, though he denied it to Swift. He sometimes presumed too far upon even the Miss Blounts' tolerance, however, for the despatch of an improper epitaph to Teresa was followed by a penitent note, and a plea for pardon.

"I assure you," he writes, in almost abject strain, "as long as I have any memory I shall never forget that piece of humanity in you. I must own I should never have looked for sincerity in your sex, and nothing was so surprising as to find it, not only in your sex, but in two of the youngest and fairest of it. If it be possible for you to pardon this last folly of mine 'twill be a greater strain of goodness than I expect even from yourselves. But whether you can pardon it or not, I think myself obliged to give you this testimony under my hand, that I must ever have that value for your characters as to express it for the future on all occasions, and in all the ways I am capable of."

Swift, it is tolerably evident, did not believe in Pope's denial of the authorship of the parody, nor did he believe in the poet's account of certain

[1] This incident is mentioned in Atterbury's Correspondence. It took place at the beginning of August 1716.

persecutions to which he was constantly subjected on account of his religion.

"Who are all these enemies you hint at?" he asks. "I can only think of Curll, Gildon, Squire Burnet, Blackmore, and a few others, whose fame I have forgot. Fools, in my opinion, are as necessary for a good writer as pen, ink, and paper. . . . However, I will grant that one thorough bookselling rogue is better qualified to vex an author than all his contemporary scribblers in critic or satire, not only by stolen copies of what was incorrect or unfit for the public, but by a downright laying other men's dulness at your door. I had a long design upon the ears of that Curll when I was in credit, but the rogue would never allow me a fair stroke at them, although my penknife was ready-drawn and sharp. I can hardly believe the relation of his being poisoned, although the historian pretends to have been an eye-witness; but I beg pardon, sack might do it, though ratsbane would not. I never saw the thing you mention as falsely imputed to you; but I think the frolics of our merry hours, even when we are guilty, should not be left to the mercy of our best friends, until Curll and his resemblers are hanged."

CHAPTER XVIII

1716–17

Correspondence with Lady M. W. Montagu—Country Visits—"Three Hours after Marriage"—The Quarrel with Cibber

EARLY in 1716 Mr. Wortley Montagu had been appointed Ambassador to the Porte, and Lady Mary, a woman of high courage and adventurous temper, decided to accompany him on the long and difficult journey to Constantinople. In July the party set out for Vienna, where they intended to spend some weeks, and it is at this time that the regular correspondence between Pope and Lady Mary begins. The poet's letters are, as usual, imitations of Voiture—a long way after—and can only be described as among the most tiresome and tasteless of all his compositions. Yet he assures the lady that his letters to her will be the most impartial representations of a free heart, and the truest copies of a very mean original. The freedom he proposes to use in this manner of talking on paper will prove him one of the best sort of fools—the honest ones. "You may easily imagine," he continues, "how desirous I must be of consequence with a person who had taught me long ago that it

was as possible to esteem at first sight as to love; and who has since ruined me for all the conversation of one sex and almost all the friendship of the other. I am but too sensible, through your means, that the company of men wants a certain softness to recommend it, and that of women wants everything else."

Lady Mary was doubtless flattered by the admiration of a man who was admittedly the first poet of the day, but she was quite clever enough to take his compliments for what they were worth. "Perhaps you'll laugh at me," she writes from Vienna on September 14, "for thanking you gravely for all the obliging concern you express for me. 'Tis certain that I may, if I please, take all the fine things you say to me for wit and raillery, and it may be it would be taking them right. But I never in my life was half so disposed to believe you in earnest; and that distance which makes the continuation of your friendship improbable has very much increased my faith in it, and I find that I have (as well as the rest of my sex), whatever face I set on't, a strong disposition to believe in it."

Pope professed to be horrified at the idea of the winter journey which the Wortleys proposed to take through Hungary to Belgrade and Constantinople. "For God's sake," he exclaims, "value yourself a little more, and don't give us cause to imagine that such extravagant virtue can exist anywhere else than in a romance." He implores Lady Mary to write only of herself, for he cares nothing for descriptions of shrines and relics, and had ten times rather go on pilgrimage to see her face than John the Baptist's

head. He dreams of following her across Europe, and, if his fate be such that his body (which is as ill-matched to his mind as any wife to any husband) be left behind in the journey, the epitaph of Tibullus shall be set over his tomb, of which he gives a free translation:

> Here, stopt by hasty death, Alexis lies,
> Who crossed half Europe, led by Wortley's eyes.

Pope paid his usual round of country visits in the autumn, and spent a few days with Dr. Clarke at Oxford, where he desired to consult the books, maps, and manuscripts at the Bodleian Library. On the journey down, which was made on horseback, he had the company of his publisher, Lintot, whose conversation he reported in an amusing letter to Lord Burlington. Lintot described how he dealt with authors and critics. Translators were the saddest pack of rogues in the world, and in a hungry fit would swear they understood every tongue in the universe. Lintot, who knew no language but his own, agreed with them for ten shillings a sheet, with the proviso that he might have their work corrected by whom he pleased. In order to make sure that the correctors did not impose upon him, he asked any civil gentleman that came into his shop—a Scotchman, for choice—to read him the original work in English, and by that he judged whether the hacks were worth their money. As for the critics, the poor ones were easily corrupted by a dinner of beef and pudding. The rich ones were simply given a sheet of blotted manuscript. With this they would go to their acquaintance and pretend

they had it from the author, who submitted to their correction. This gave some of them such an air that in time they came to be consulted as the top critics of the town.

Pope probably paid a visit to the Carylls at East Grinstead, where the Blounts were staying in September. The sisters fancied that they were not made welcome, and confided their grievances to Pope.

"Are you really of opinion," asks the poet, "you are an inconvenient part of my friend's family? Do ye fancy the best man in England is so very good as not to be fond of ye? Why, St. Austin himself would have kissed ye—St. Jerome would have shaved against your coming—St. Peter would have dried his eyes at the sight of you." In brotherly fashion he wishes them luck at cards and good husbands, and concludes with a piece of advice: "It is full as well to marry in the country as in the town, provided you can bring your husbands up with you afterwards, and make them stay as long as you will. These two considerations every wise virgin should have in her head, not forgetting the third, which is—a separate allowance. O Pin-money! dear, desirable Pin-money! in thee are included all the blessings of women. In these are comprised fine clothes, fine lodgings, fine masquerades, fine fellows. Foh! says Mrs. Teresa, at this last article—and so I hold my tongue."

In November Pope was staying at Jervas's house in Whitehall. He wrote thence to the artist, who was still in Ireland, that he had been entertained at Oxford with some interesting drawings, including

the original designs of Inigo Jones for Whitehall and some early pictures of Jervas's, which future painters would look on as poets did on the "Culex" of Virgil. He urges Jervas to make his appearance as a history-painter, and not waste his time on "such silly stories as our faces tell of. Meanwhile," he concludes, "I rule the family very ill, keep bad hours, and lend out your pictures about the town. See what it is to have a poet in your house! Frank, indeed, does all he can in such a circumstance; for, considering he has a wild beast in it, he constantly keeps the door chained."

The great success of Gay's farce, *The What-d'ye-call't?*, tempted Pope and Arbuthnot to aid him, in the composition of a new piece, *Three Hours after Marriage*, which was produced in 1717. Gay's star was in the ascendant just then, for, though he had not yet obtained a place, he had made a decided hit with his poem "The Trivia; or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London," which was published in 1716. The tiny work was brought out at the enormous price of one guinea, and Pope, who helped to procure subscribers, believed that Gay cleared about a hundred and fifty pounds out of it. Arbuthnot declared that Gay had made so much by his "Art of Walking the Streets" that he was ready to set up his equipage. The new farce, which contained satires on several well-known men and women, was a very inferior piece to *The What-d'ye-call't?*. It was dull, it was rather indecent, and it was deservedly hissed by the audience. The principal character, a pedantic doctor, was intended

for Dr. Woodward,[1] a physician of some notoriety, while his daughter, Phœbe Clinket, was a caricature of Lady Winchelsea,[2] for which Pope was held responsible. Instead of making puddings, Phœbe makes pastorals, and when she ought to be raising paste she is raising a ghost in a new tragedy. Dennis was introduced as Sir Tremendous, a critic, and Cibber as Mr. Plotwell. It was an open secret that Pope and Arbuthnot had a hand in the work. In a "Complete Key" to the farce, the following lines appear on the title-page:

> The play is damned, and Gay would fain evade it,
> He cries, "Damn Pope and Arbuthnot!" who made it;
> But the fool's-cap that on the stage was thrown
> They take by turns, and wear it as their own.

Pope was deeply mortified at the failure, though Gay was too generous to allow the responsibility for the mishap to fall on the friends who had helped him. There are genuine pluck and good-humour in a letter which he wrote to Pope after the first performance:

"Too late, I see and confess myself mistaken

[1] Dr. John Woodward (1665-1728). He studied geology as well as medicine, and published an "Essay toward a Natural History of the Earth." He was probably a quarrelsome person, for he was expelled from the council of the Royal Society for insulting Sir Hans Sloane.

[2] Anne, the poetical Countess of Winchelsea. She published a volume of "Miscellany Poems" in 1713. On December 15 of that year Pope had excused himself for not meeting Caryll on the ground that "I was invited that day to dinner to my Lady Winchelsea, and after dinner to hear a play read, at both which I sat in great disorder, with sickness at my head and stomach." The play was probably a tragedy by the lady herself. Lady Winchelsea addressed a copy of laudatory verses to Pope, presumably before he had caricatured her. She died in 1720.

in relation to the comedy; yet I do not think, had I followed your advice, and only introduced the mummy, that the absence of the crocodile had saved it. I cannot help laughing myself (though the vulgar do not consider it was designed to look ridiculous) to think how the poor monster and mummy were dashed at their reception; and when the cry was loudest, I thought that if the thing had been written by another I should have deemed the town in some measure mistaken; and as to your apprehension that this may do us future injury, do not think of it; the doctor has a more valuable name than can be hurt by anything of this nature, and yours is doubly safe. I will, if any shame there be, take it all to myself, as indeed I ought, the notion being mine, and never heartily approved by you. . . . I beg of you not to suffer this, or anything else, to hurt your health. As I have publicly said [in the Preface] that I was assisted by two friends, I shall still continue in the same story, professing obstinate silence about Dr. Arbuthnot and yourself."

The principal "situation" in the farce is that wherein the two lovers of the doctor's wife conceal themselves in his laboratory, the one inside a mummy, the other inside a crocodile. Cibber, who no doubt had recognised himself in Plotwell, revived the Duke of Buckingham's ever-popular piece, *The Rehearsal* in February of this year. It was usual to put topical allusions into the mouth of "Mr. Bayes," the poet, and Cibber introduced a harmless "gag" to the effect that he had intended to bring on the two Kings of Brentford, the one as a

mummy, the other as a crocodile. This feeble joke proved too much for Pope's irritable vanity. He went behind the scenes and roundly abused the actor, who declared that he would repeat the gag as long as the play was acted. This is Cibber's story. A version containing slightly more detail is furnished by a gossiping letter from Montagu Bacon to his cousin, James Montagu :

"To touch upon the polite world before I conclude, I don't know whether you heard, before you went out of town, that *The Rehearsal* was revived, not having been acted before these ten years, and Cibber interlarded it with several things in ridicule of the last play, upon which Pope went up to him and told him he was a rascal, and if he were able he would cane him; that his friend Gay was a proper fellow, and if he went on in his sauciness he might expect such a reception from him. The next night Gay came accordingly, and, treating him as Pope had done the night before, Cibber very fairly gave him a fillip on the nose, which made them both roar. The Guards came and parted them, and carried away Gay, and so ended this poetical scuffle."

Bacon was wrong, however: the affair did not end here, but resulted, twenty years later, in Cibber's appearance as the hero of "The Dunciad," *vice* Theobald deposed.

During the spring of this year Pope was busily engaged in preparing his third volume of the "Iliad" for the press, and also in writing a Preface for his collected works, which were to appear on the same day. His eyesight suffered from the

strain, and his correspondence languished, though he was still writing impassioned letters to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, for whom, the further she travelled from England, the warmer his feelings appeared to glow. In January she had started on her journey across Hungary to Belgrade and Constantinople. Pope professed to be in a state of alarm and anxiety on her account that bordered on frenzy.

"Till now," he writes on February 3, "I had some small hopes in God and fortune. I waited for accidents, and had at least the faint comfort of a wish when I thought of you; I am now—I cannot tell what—I will not tell what, for it would grieve you. This letter is a piece of madness, that throws me after you in a most distracted manner. I do not know which way to write, which way to send it, or if ever it will reach your hands. If it does, what can you infer from it, but what I am half afraid and half willing you should know—how very much I was yours, how unfortunately well I knew you, and with what a miserable constancy shall I ever remember you?" He has no longer any desire to see Italy, but now envies the deserts of Hungary more than any part of the polite world. "You touch me very sensibly in saying you think so well of my *friendship*; in that you do me too much honour. Would to God you would (even at this distance) allow me to correct this period, and change these phrases according to the real truth of my *heart*!"

Lady Mary had been assured, in Vienna, that the whole Ambassadorial party would be frozen to

death, buried in snow, or captured by the Tartars, while passing over the plains of Hungary; but by the time Pope's letter reached her she was in a position to laugh at all these alarming prophecies, for she had found a warm stove and plenty of good food at each stopping-place. Probably the poet's protestations appealed more to her sense of humour than to her heart; at any rate, she took no notice of them, but wrote to him in much the same lively, sensible style that she used to her sister, Lady Mar, or her friend, Lady Rich. There is a little more care in the composition, perhaps, and to the "judicious translator of Homer" she gives some account of the old Greek customs that still lingered among the country people around Constantinople.

She has been re-reading Mr. Pope's version of the "Iliad" with infinite pleasure, and finds several passages explained of which she had not before understood the full beauty. The young shepherds still whiled away the long sunny days in making music upon their oaten pipes, or weaving garlands for the lambs that lay at their feet. The old men sat in the gate, and the ladies passed their time at the loom surrounded by their maidens, while the dances were the same that Diana danced on the banks of the Eurotas.

In June Pope sent out to Constantinople a wooden box containing the new volume of the "Iliad," and "all that he was worth besides"—namely, his collected "Works." "There are few things in them," he tells Lady Mary, "but what you have already seen, except 'The Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard,' in which you will find one passage that I cannot tell

whether to wish you should understand or not." With an abrupt change of subject, he then gives a concise summary of the current news of the town. "We have masquerades at the theatre in the Haymarket of Mr. Heidegers's [1] institution; they are very frequent, yet the adventures are not so numerous but that of my Lady Mohun still makes the chief figure. Her marriage to young Mordant,[2] and all its circumstances, I suppose you will have from Lady Rich or Miss Griffith. The political state is under great divisions, the parties of Walpole and Stanhope as violent as Whig and Tory.[3] The king and prince continue two names; there is nothing like a coalition but at the masquerade; however, the princess is a dissenter from it, and has a very small party in so unmodish a separation."

[1] J. J. Heidegger, the celebrated manager of operas and masquerades.

[2] The notorious Lady Mohun took, for her third husband, Charles Mordaunt, a nephew of the great Earl of Peterborough. He was much younger than herself.

[3] Walpole resigned on April 10, 1717, in consequence of his quarrels with Stanhope.

CHAPTER XIX

1717

Pope's "Works"—"The Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard"

THE collected "Works" of Pope, who was then, be it remembered, only twenty-nine, appeared on June 3, 1717, in a substantial quarto volume, with a portrait of the author (engraved by Vertue after Jervas), numerous vignettes by Gribelin, and a long Preface. The Preface deserves some notice on account of the autobiographical style in which it is written. The poet expresses himself with a certain exaggerated modesty, which is but a transparent cloak for his high appreciation of his own talents and character and his eager desire for the approbation of the public. He claims that the world has never been prepared for these "trifles" by prefaces, biassed by recommendations, dazzled by the names of great patrons, wheedled with fine reasons, or troubled with excuses.

"I confess," he continues, "it was want of consideration that made me an author. I writ because it amused me ; I corrected because it was as pleasant to me to correct as to write ; and I published be-

cause I was told I might please such as it was a credit to please. . . . In this office of collecting my pieces, I am altogether uncertain whether to look upon myself as a man building a monument, or burying the dead. If time shall make it the former, may these poems, as long as they last, remain as a testimony that the author never made his talents subservient to the mean and unworthy ends of party or self-interest; the gratification of public prejudices or private passions; the flattery of the undeserving or the insult of the unfortunate."

If, however, the publication be only a solemn funeral of his remains, he desires it may be known that he dies in charity—and in his senses, without any murmurs against the justice of the age, or any mad appeals to posterity. "However," he concludes, "I desire it may then be considered, that there are very few things in this collection which were not written under the age of five-and-twenty: so that my youth may be made, as it never fails to be in executions, a case of compassion; that I was never so concerned about my works as to vindicate them in print, believing, if anything was good, it would defend itself and what was bad could never be defended; that I used no artifice to raise or continue a reputation, depreciated no dead author I was obliged to, bribed no living one with unjust praise, insulted no adversary with ill language, or, when I could not attack a rival's work, encouraged reports against his morals. To conclude, if this volume perish, let it serve as a warning to the critics not to take too much pains, for the future, to destroy such things as will die of themselves; and a *memento*

mori to some of my vain contemporaries, the poets, to teach them that when real merit is wanting, it avails nothing to have been encouraged by the great, commended by the eminent, and favoured by the public in general."

The first draft of this Preface, which was considered an admirable specimen of the author's prose style, was written as early as November 1716, and sent to Atterbury for his opinion. The Bishop of Rochester declared that the modesty and good sense of the composition must please everybody who read it, and he saw no reason why it should not be printed, "always provided there is nothing said there which you have occasion to unsay hereafter, of which you yourself are the best and only judge." There was a touch of the prophetic spirit about this warning, since the poet lived to violate most of the professions he had here made.

The two chief novelties of the collection were the "Elegy in Memory of an Unfortunate Lady" and "The Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard." These two poems are supposed to disprove the accusation sometimes brought against Pope—that he was merely the Poet of Reason, and could delineate neither the heights of passion nor the depths of pathos. To the modern taste, perhaps "The Epistle of Eloisa," with all its splendour of phrasing, seems more like a brilliant *tour de force* than an outflow of genuine feeling. The work was probably based on Hughes' free translation (published in 1714) of the French version of the famous Letters. The authenticity of the Latin version[1] is not beyond suspicion, and

[1] Published in 1616.

a modern critic is justified in his adaptation of Rosalind's words to the pseudo-original:

> I say she never did invent "those letters";
> This is a man's invention, and his hand.

Into the mouth of Eloisa, whose imagination would surely be purged by long years of suffering and renunciation, are put the sensual expressions of a passionate youth. Pope, in his version, has exaggerated rather than modified this inherent defect, with the result that we never lose the impression that a man is masquerading in Eloisa's habit—a young man, moreover, with his blood on fire and his senses on the alert.

The story of the unfortunate loves of Abelard and Eloisa is well known. It will be sufficient to remind the reader that the famous Letters were written several years after the separation of the lovers. Eloisa and her nuns had been established in the Paraclete by Abelard, after they had been driven out of the Abbey of Argenteuil. The lovers had not met or corresponded for several years, when a letter written by Abelard to a friend fell into the hands of Eloisa. This document, which contained an account of his unhappy romance and its consequences, reawakened all her sleeping passion, and inspired the Letters[1] which have been celebrated for nearly three hundred years.

Pope begins his poem at the moment when Eloisa, having just read her lover's letter, is tempted to write to him once again. For a while she struggles with the temptation, but finally succumbs. In

[1] Assuming their authenticity.

moving strains she implores Abelard not to deny her the solace of his written words. She reminds him of her innocence when first they met, and she thought him a being of "angelic kind." But alas!

> From lips like those, what precepts failed to move?
> Too soon they taught me 'twas no sin to love:
> Back through the paths of pleasing sense I ran,
> Nor wished an angel whom I loved a man.

With an abrupt transition she breaks into the now famous manifesto in favour of free love:

> How oft, when pressed to marriage, have I said,
> Curse on all laws but those which love has made!
> Love, free as air, at sight of human ties
> Spreads his light wings and in a moment flies.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Should at my feet the world's great master fall,
> Himself, his throne, his world, I'd scorn them all.
> Not Cæsar's empress would I deign to prove;
> No, make me mistress to the man I love;
> If there be yet another name more free,
> More fond than mistress, make me that to thee.
> Oh, happy state! when souls each other draw,
> When love is liberty, and nature law!

In vivid words Eloisa depicts the mournful solitude of her surroundings, where—

> Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws
> A death-like silence and a dread repose:
> Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,
> Shades every flower, and darkens every green;
> Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
> And breathes a browner horror on the woods.[1]

[1] A striking or unusual epithet in Pope's work is frequently found to be the result of a good memory rather than an active imagination. This line is imitated from Dryden's—

> The Trojans from the main beheld a wood,
> Which thick with shades and a brown horror stood.

Yet here, at her lover's desire, she will stay, till death breaks her chain. Here she will play the part of the spouse of Christ, though—

> Confessed within the slave of God and man.

In chiselled verse, more remarkable for brilliant antitheses than sincerity of feeling, she continues her poetical complaint :

> Ev'n here, where frozen chastity retires,
> Love finds an altar for forbidden fires.
> I ought to grieve, but cannot what I ought,
> I mourn the lover, not lament the fault;
> I view my crime, but kindle at the view;
> Repent old pleasures, and solicit new;
> Now turned to heaven, I weep my past offence,
> Now think of thee, and curse my innocence.
> Of all affliction taught a lover yet,
> 'Tis sure the hardest science to forget.
> How shall I lose the sin, yet keep the sense,
> And love the offender, yet detest the offence?

So the monodrama goes on, the conflict between the claims of a sensual love and a sensuous religion. Eloisa looks with envy on the blameless vestal's lot—

> The world forgetting, by the world forgot—

and compares her own storm-tossed soul and dreams of earthly love with "the eternal sunshine of the spotless mind." Abelard's image steals between her and her God, and she hears his voice in every hymn. Even at High Mass—

> One thought of thee puts all the past to flight,
> Priests, tapers, temples, swim before my sight.
> In seas of flame my plunging soul is drowned,
> While altars blaze, and angels tremble round.

One moment she urges Abelard to come to her, and—

> With one glance of those deluding eyes
> Blot out each bright idea of the skies—

while the next she implores him to fly from her as far as pole from pole—

> Rise, Alps, between us! and whole oceans roll!

From the neighbouring tombs she hears a spirit-voice that calls her to find peace and calm in the eternal sleep. She declares herself eager and ready to depart, and only pleads that Abelard may render her the last sad office:

> Present the cross before my lifted eye,
> Teach me at once, and learn of me, to die.

Ardently she prays that their hapless names may be united in one kind grave, and then—

> If ever chance two wandering lovers brings
> To Paraclete's white walls and silver springs,
> O'er the pale marble shall they join their heads,
> And drink the falling tears each other sheds;
> Then sadly say, with mutual pity moved,
> "Oh, may we never love as these have loved!"

The poem concludes with the famous eight lines which were sent to both Martha Blount and Lady Mary Wortley. Each lady was bidden to apply the meaning to herself; but, whoever inspired the lines, they bear evident trace of having been written under the stress of strong personal feeling:

> And, sure, if fate some future bard shall join
> In sad similitude of griefs to mine,
> Condemned whole years in absence to deplore
> And image charms he must behold no more;

> Such, if there be, who loves so long, so well,
> Let him our sad, our tender story tell;
> The well-sung woes will soothe my pensive ghost;
> He best can paint them who can feel them most.

Upon none of Pope's compositions have such lavish praises been poured out as upon "The Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard." Critics partial and critics impartial have vied with each other in discovering new phrases of appreciation. Johnson declared that the poet had left nothing behind him which seemed more the effect of studious perseverance and laborious revisal—a verdict which was intended to be more flattering than it sounds. Byron preferred the Epistle to the famous "Ode" of Sappho. Bowles thought it superior to any of the classic Epistles, including those of Ovid, Propertius, and Tibullus. In fact, it was generally agreed that the poem was unequalled for pathos, picturesqueness, judicious contrasts, dramatic transitions, the glow of passion, and the musical cadence of the verse.

It is always interesting to hear the opinion of foreign critics on our most admired compositions. That anti-Pope, Taine, has dealt in drastic fashion with poor Eloisa. Pope, he remarks, has endued the unhappy lady with wit; in his hands she becomes an academician, and her Letter is a repertory of literary effects. She bombards Abelard with portraits and descriptions, declamation and commonplace, antitheses and contrasts. Her theme is a bravura with contrasts of forte and piano, variations and changes of key. "Now it is a happy image, filling up a whole phrase; now a series of verses, full of symmetrical contrasts; two ordinary

words set in relief by strange conjunction ; an imitative rhythm completing the impression of the mind by the emotion of the senses ; the most elegant comparisons and the most picturesque epithets ; the closest style and the most ornate. Except truth, nothing is wanting. Eloisa is worse than a singer—she is an author : we look at the back of her 'Epistle to Abelard' to see if she has not written on it, 'For Press.'"

CHAPTER XX

1717

Social Engagements—Country Visits—Death of the Elder Pope—Misunderstandings with the Blounts

IN the summer of this year Pope describes himself as "full of company and business"—correcting the Press, revising verses, managing subscribers, entertaining Catholic friends, and being entertained by "persons of quality." He sent the volume of his "Works" to Caryll, but refrained from saying a word about it, "though an author might reasonably be allowed to be at least as full of his new works as a lady of a new suit of clothes. The Preface will tell you everything, to a tittle, what I think about them."

Pope proposed to make a visit to his friends at East Grinstead in the course of the summer. Patty Blount, he says, has a hankering after her godfather,[1] and has advised him to delay his visit until she can make hers. The Blounts were just settling into their new house in Bolton Street, but Pope thought that London at that season was scarcely the place for Patty, whose health was never very strong. The intimacy between the poet and the Blount ladies may be gauged from the fact that Pope asked Caryll for

[1] Mr. Caryll was Patty's godfather.

twelve dozen of good French wine whenever a hogshead fell into his hands,[1] but explains that half the quantity is for Patty, "who scorns to be behindhand with me in any vicious appetite I can pretend to—and yet, God knows, for your ghostly comfort, may be a saint for all that."

The visit to East Grinstead was indefinitely postponed, however, for Pope, it is to be feared, was beginning to look down on his untitled country friends. By the breaking up of Parliament half his acquaintance had become his neighbours on the banks of the Thames, and August finds him still at Chiswick. He has been dancing attendance on Lord Burlington, and visiting the Dukes of Shrewsbury and Argyll, Lady Rochester, and my Lords Percival and Winchelsea, to say nothing of Sir Godfrey Kneller, who had given him a fine picture. "All these," he explains to Caryll, "have indispensable claims to me, under penalty of the imputation of direct rudeness, living within two hours' sail of Chiswick."

In consequence of his many important engagements, the poet was unable to set out on his annual country ramble before September. On the 13th of that month he wrote to the Miss Blounts "as plain a history of my pilgrimage as Purchas himself could do." In the first place he had gone to Hampton Court by water, and had met the prince and all his ladies coming home from hunting. Mary Bellenden[2]

[1] Sussex was famous for its contraband commerce, and the landlords sympathised with the smugglers. Pope was asking for wine that had paid no customs.

[2] Gay calls her "Smiling Mary, soft and fair as down." She was a daughter of John, Lord Bellenden, and married Colonel Campbell, afterwards Duke of Argyll.

and Mary Lepell,[1] the charming if flighty maids-of-honour, had taken him under their protection (contrary to the law against harbouring Papists) and given him a dinner, which was followed by something he liked much better—the opportunity of a conversation with Mrs. Howard.[2]

"We all agreed," he continues, "that the life of a maid-of-honour was of all things the most miserable, and wished that every woman who envied it had a specimen of it. To eat Westphalia ham in a morning, ride over hedges and ditches on borrowed hacks, come home in the heat of the day with a fever, and (what is worse, a hundred times) with a red mark in the forehead from an uneasy hat!—all this may qualify them to make excellent wives for fox-hunters, and bear abundance of ruddy-complexioned children. As soon as they can wipe off the sweat of the day they must simper an hour, and catch cold, in the princess's apartments; from thence (as Shakespeare has it) *to dinner, with what appetite they may*—and after that, till midnight, walk, work, or think, which they please. I can easily believe no lone house in Wales, with a mountain and a rookery, is more contemplative than this Court; and, as a proof of it, I need only tell you Mrs. L[epell] walked with me three or four hours by moonlight, and we met no creature of any quality but the king, who gave audience to the Vice-Chamberlain all alone, under the garden-wall."[3]

[1] Afterwards married to John, Lord Hervey.

[2] Nominally bed-chamber woman to the Princess of Wales, but generally believed to be the mistress of the Prince of Wales. She became Countess of Suffolk in 1731.

[3] Pope sent much the same account to Lady Mary Wortley

The poet then proceeded on a round of country-house visits. He stayed with Lord Harcourt and Lord Bathurst, among others, spent a night at Blenheim, and passed some days at Oxford. At Lord Harcourt's he met a beautiful Mrs. Jennings, who is described as "nearer to an angel than a woman." At any rate, she was charming enough to be a credit to the Maker of angels. On the terrestrial plane, however, she was only a poor relation of Lord Harcourt's, who solemnly proposed that Pope should marry her, evidently thinking that a deformed poet, with a small but certain income, would be a fair match for a penniless beauty. "I told him," says Pope, who was always frank about his personal defects, "that it was what he never could have thought of, if it had not been his misfortune to be blind, and what I never could think of, while I had eyes to see both her and myself."

A visit to Oxford was always a delight to the poet, who probably never felt the disabilities of his religion so keenly as in the old halls and shady gardens of the University. There is no prettier bit of word-painting in all his correspondence than the passage in which he describes (to Martha Blount) his ride through the shades of an autumn evening from Windsor Forest to Oxford, and nearly every syllable rings true :

"Nothing could have more of that melancholy which once used to please me than my last day's

Montagu in 1718, after the quarrel between the two Courts. He then says : "I walked there [Hampton Court] the other day by the moon, and met no creature of any quality but the king, who was giving audience all alone to the birds under the garden-wall."

journey; for, after having passed through my favourite woods in the Forest, with a thousand reveries of past pleasures, I rid over hanging hills, whose tops were edged with groves and whose feet were watered with winding rivers, listening to the fall of cataracts below, and the murmuring of the winds above. The gloomy verdure of the Stonor succeeded to these; and then the shades of evening overtook me. The moon rose in the clearest sky I ever saw, by whose solemn light I paced on slowly, without company, or any interruption to the range of my thoughts. About a mile before I reached Oxford, all the bells tolled in different notes; the clocks of every college answered one another and sounded forth (some in deeper, some in softer tone) that it was eleven at night. All this was no ill preparation to the life I have led since, among those old walls, venerable galleries, stone porticos, studious walks, and solitary scenes of the University. I wanted nothing but a black gown and a salary to be as mere a bookworm as any there. I conformed myself to the college hours, was rolled up in books, lay in one of the most ancient, dusky parts of the University, and was as dead to the world as any hermit of the desert. If anything was alive or awake in me it was a little vanity, such as even those good men used to entertain when the monks of their own order extolled their piety and abstraction. For I found myself received with a sort of respect, which this idle part of mankind, the learned, pay to their own species; who are as considerable here as the busy, the gay, and the ambitious are in your world."

Pope was back in town by October 5, and still holding out hopes that he would pay the long-promised visit to the Carylls. It is not likely, however, that he again left home, for on October 23 his father died suddenly.[1] The next morning the poet wrote to Martha Blount, to whom, rather than to Teresa, he turned in his affliction: "My poor father died last night. Believe, since I do not forget you this moment, I never shall."

Martha replied in no less brief and simple fashion:—"My sister and I shall be at home all day. If any company comes that you don't like, I'll go up into my room with you. I hope we shall see you."

On the 28th Pope wrote to inform Caryll of his bereavement. His father's death, he says, was the happiest imaginable,[2] but he himself had lost one to whom he was even more obliged as a friend than as a father. "My poor mother," he adds, "is so afflicted that it would be barbarity to leave her this winter, which is the true reason that I am not now at Ladyholt."

The loss of his father made little real difference in Pope's fortunes or way of life. For a time, at least, to quote his own words, he would be less of a poet, though not, he hoped, less of a gentleman. He was left, he declared, to the management of so narrow a fortune that any one false step would be fatal. This was rather an exaggerated account of

[1] Mr. Pope was in his seventy-sixth year.

[2] His life, though long, to sickness passed unknown,
His death was instant, and without a groan.
Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.

the situation. Pope the elder left several thousand pounds, carefully invested in French securities, which, with the interest of the sums paid for the "Iliad," brought in an income of six or seven hundred a year. Pope had no extravagant tastes, he was not likely to marry, and there seemed no reason why he and his mother should make any change in their prudent though comfortable manner of living.

The Bishop of Rochester, however, thought that the poet might now improve his position by changing his faith. In his letter of condolence Atterbury rather crudely suggests that, "When you have paid the debt of tenderness you owe to the memory of a father, I doubt not but you will turn your thoughts towards improving that accident to your own ease and happiness. You have it now in your power to pursue that method of thinking and living which you like best."

Pope, though never an orthodox son of Holy Church, was rather shocked at the cool cynicism of the bishop's suggestion. He wrote an excellent letter in reply, in which he gave a summary of his principles, political and religious. With the death of his father he had not lost the only tie that bound him to the old religion. "I thank God another still remains (and long may it remain) of the same tender nature. . . . A rigid divine may call it a carnal tie ; but sure it is a virtuous one. At least I am more certain that it is a duty of nature to preserve a good parent's life and happiness than I am of any speculative point whatever. . . . For she, my lord, would think this separation more grievous than any other, and I, for my part, know

as little as poor Euryalus did of the success of such an adventure."

Although he cannot tell whether the change would be to his spiritual advantage, he fully admits that, on the temporal side, the arguments are all with the bishop; but even if he possessed the talents for an active career, he lacked the health for it, and was convinced that a contemplative life was the only one for which he was really fitted. As for his political and religious sentiments, he only desires to preserve the peace of his life in any Government under which he lives, and the peace of his conscience in any church with which he communicates. "I am not a Papist," he explains with unusual candour, "for I renounce the temporal invasions of the papal power, and detest their arrogated authority over princes and states. I am a Catholic in the strictest sense of the word. . . . I have a due sense of the excellence of the British Constitution. In a word, the things I have always wished to see are not a Roman Catholic, or a French Catholic, but a true Catholic; not a king of Whigs or a king of Tories, but a king of England, which God in His mercy grant his present majesty may be, and all future majesties."

At the end of this year some mysterious trouble arose between Pope and his old friends, the Blounts. As far as can be gathered from the correspondence, the sisters had somehow contrived to wound the sensitive feelings of the poet. Apparently he thought himself less welcome than formerly, and it may be that he found less sympathy than he expected during his time of mourning. Again, he felt, or

professed to feel, too warmly towards one of the sisters to bear with philosophy being treated as a mere friendly acquaintance. Injured feeling, or possibly wounded vanity, is the key-note of a letter addressed "To the Young Ladies of Bolton Street." He begins by informing them that he no longer intends to be a constant companion, since he has ceased to be an agreeable one. They, as his friends, have had the privilege of knowing his unhappiness, and are therefore the only people whom his company must make melancholy. He feels that he comes across their diversions like a skeleton, and dashes their pleasures. "Nothing can be more shocking than to be perpetually meeting the ghost of an old acquaintance, which is all you can ever see of me."

The sisters are not to imagine, however, that his absence proceeds from any decrease of friendship. If they had any love for him he would always be glad to gratify them with an object that they thought agreeable, but feelings of mere friendship and esteem may be as well, or better, preserved at a distance. "And, you may depend upon it, I will wait upon you on every occasion at the first summons as long as I live. I have sometimes found myself inclined to be in love with you, and, as I have reason to know, from your temper and conduct, how miserably I should be used in that circumstance, it is worth my while to avoid it. It is enough to be disagreeable without adding food to it by constant slavery. I have heard, indeed, of women that have had a kindness for men of my make. . . . I love you so well that I tell you the truth, and that has

made me write this letter. I will see you less frequently this winter, as you'll less want company. When the gay part of the world is gone, I'll be ready to stop the gap of a vacant hour whenever you please. Till then I'll converse with those who are more indifferent to me, as you will with those who are more entertaining. I wish you every pleasure God and man can pour upon ye; and I faithfully promise you all the good I can do, which is the service of a friend who will ever be, ladies, entirely yours."

CHAPTER XXI

1718

Quarrel with the Blounts—Stanton Harcourt—Fate of the Rustic Lovers

FOR some time after his father's death Pope retired from the "great world." He describes himself as living in a deep desert solitude, immersed in books, and seeing no company beyond his own family, for a week at a time. He is sick of the vanities of the town, and had taken his last leave of impertinence at a masquerade—the true epitome of all absurdities—some time before. "I was led thither, as one is to all foolish things—by keeping foolish company; after saying which it would be unmannerly to add, it was that of a great person. But of late the great have been the shining examples of folly, public and private, and the best translation at this time of "O tempora! O mores!" would be "O kings! O princes!"

His low spirits and aversion to society at this period may have been partly owing to his strained relations with the Blounts. The chief quarrel was with the once-favoured Teresa, whom he had been assisting in some financial speculations—always a delicate and dangerous service. At the same time

he seems to have been thinking seriously of marriage, and to have asked Teresa, in confidence, whether she thought that he had a chance with Patty. Teresa, who, for some reason or other, was annoyed at his offer of financial assistance, appears to have betrayed his confidence and misrepresented his intentions to her sister. The following letter to Teresa, dated February 21, gives some account of the affair, which remains, however, as regards the details, one of the petty mysteries of Pope's life:

"I desire to know," he begins abruptly, "what is your meaning, to resent my complying with your request and endeavouring to serve you in the way you proposed, as if I had done you some great injury? You told me, if such a thing was the secret of my heart, you should entirely forgive and think well of me. I told it, and find the contrary. You pretended so much generosity as to offer your service in my behalf. The minute after you did me as ill an office as you could, in telling the party concerned it was all but an amusement, occasioned by my loss of another lady.

"You express yourself desirous of increasing your present income upon life. I proposed the only method I then could find, and you encouraged me to proceed in it. When it was done, you received it as if it were an affront, since, when I find the very thing in the very manner you wished, and mention it to you, you do not think it worth an answer.

"If your meaning be that the very things you ask and wish become odious to you when it is I that comply with them, or bring them about, pray own it, and deceive me no longer with any thought but

that you hate me. My friendship is too warm and sincere to be trifled with; therefore, if you have any meaning, tell it me, or you must allow me to take away that which perhaps you do not care to keep."

The next move in this curious affair was that on March 10, 1718, Pope executed a deed by which he settled an annuity of forty pounds a year for six years on Teresa, on condition that she should not be married during that period. It has been taken for granted by Pope's biographers that he paid the annuity out of his pocket, but it is hardly credible that a girl of Teresa's social standing would accept an allowance from a man who was not related to her. It seems much more likely that the annuity was paid as interest on some capital that she had invested in one of their joint speculations.[1] In the case of her marriage, the arrangement would naturally come to an end, since her little fortune would pass into the possession of her husband.

The quarrel resulted in a temporary breach between Chiswick and Bolton Street. But the sisters must have missed their poetical friend, for it was not long before they begged him to resume his visits on the old footing. His answer is full of wounded feeling, and there are few letters in his correspondence more sincere in tone.

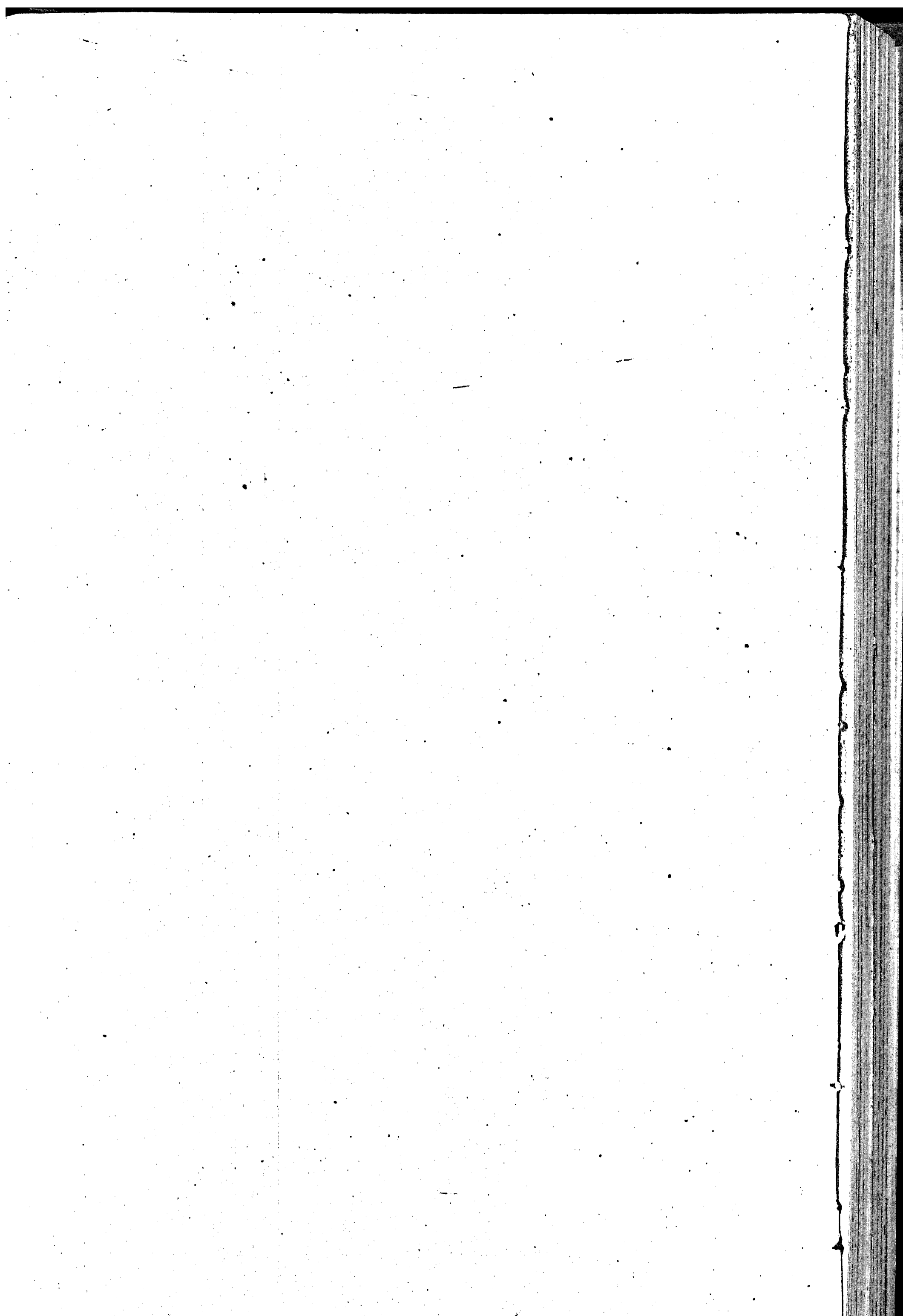
"Ladies," he begins, "pray think me sensible of your civility and good meaning in asking me to come to you. You will please to consider that my

[1] For example, it appears that in 1716 Pope had speculated for himself and the Blounts in lottery tickets, which were payable in annuities.



From an original painting.

MARTHA AND TERESA BLOUNT.



coming or not is a thing indifferent to both of you. But God knows it is far otherwise with me in respect to one of you.

"I scarce ever come but one of two things happens, which equally affect me to the soul: either I make her uneasy, or I see her unkind.

"If she has any tenderness, I can only give her every day trouble and melancholy. If she has none, the daily sight of so undeserved a coldness must wound me to the quick.

"It is forcing one of us to do a very hard and unjust thing to the other. My continuing to see you will, by turns, tease all of us. My staying away can, at worst, be of ill consequence only to myself.

"And if one of us is to be sacrificed, I believe we are all three agreed who shall be the person."

Though the quarrel was soon made up, and Pope renewed his friendly relations with the sisters, it is probable that he never quite forgave Teresa, and ten years later the grudge he bore her burst out into open enmity.

Meanwhile, through all these lovers' squabbles, the poet had kept up his gallant correspondence with Lady Mary Wortley. In the autumn of 1717 Mr. Wortley had been recalled from Constantinople, though he did not actually return to England till October 1718. On hearing the news of the recall, Pope wrote to Lady Mary to express his delight that fortune was about to return to her friends the most precious thing of which it had ever robbed them. In fact, her presence would be the only equivalent for Mr. Pitt's famous diamond, which had just been bought for the young King of France.

Pope had commissioned Lady Mary to bring over a fair Circassian slave, who was to resemble her ladyship as nearly as possible, though with the colours a little less vivid, and the eyes a little less bright; otherwise, instead of being her master, he would only be her slave. He was eager to know whether the Wortleys intended coming home through Italy, for in that case he would meet them there, and travel back with them. "Allow me but to sneak after you in your train, to fill my pockets with coins, or to lug an old busto behind you, and I shall be proud beyond expression. Let people think, if they will, that I did all this for the pleasure of treading on classic ground; I would whisper other reasons in your ear."

In the spring of 1718 Pope suffered from one of his periodical attacks of severe illness. In a brief letter to Lady Mary he explains that, in writing to her, he is disobeying a despotic doctor—probably Arbuthnot—who has ordered him to think but slightly of anything. He is practising whether he can so think of her, for then he might look upon the sun as a spangle and the world as a walnut. "I cannot express to you," he continues, with an ardour that may have been heightened by his annoyance with the Blounts, "how I long to see you face to face; if ever you come again I shall never be able to behave with decency: I shall walk, look, and talk at such a rate that all the town must know I have seen something more than human. Come, for God's sake, come, Lady Mary; come quickly!"

In July Pope accepted the invitation of Lord Harcourt to spend a quiet month at an old house at

Stanton Harcourt,[1] in Oxfordshire, where he hoped to recruit his health and finish the fifth volume of Homer. By what he called a *coup de maître*, he persuaded his old mother to accompany him to Stanton Harcourt. For the latter part of the summer Lord Bathurst put his splendid house at Cirencester at the poet's disposal, as he himself was unable to come down before Michaelmas. Meanwhile, the Miss Blounts were awaiting their annual summer invitation to East Grinstead, where Pope usually contrived to join them. But by August 6 the invitation had not arrived, and Pope wrote to Patty from Stanton Harcourt:

"I would give the world if you had the courage, both of you, to pass the fortnight in and about my wood [at Cirencester]. I would secure you of a good house, within an hour of it, and a daily entertainment in it. I go thither very speedily. I am sure of your sister, at least, that she would do this, or anything else, if she had a mind to it. . . . My mother, Gay, and I will meet you, and show you Blenheim by the way. I dare believe Mrs. Blount would not stick out at my request. And so, damn Grinstead and all its works."

This same letter contains a long and picturesque account of the melancholy fate of two rustic lovers who were killed by lightning during Pope's stay at Stanton Harcourt. So powerfully did the incident impress the poet's mind that he sent versions of the

[1] The house, which was near Lord Harcourt's place at Colethorpe, was a half-furnished, ramshackle old place. Pope wrote a semi-fictitious account of it to Lady Mary Wortley, in a style evidently modelled upon some of Addison's papers in *The Spectator*.

same story to several of his friends, including Lady Mary Wortley, Caryll, Lord Bathurst, and Atterbury.

On the last day of July—so the story runs—two young lovers, John Hewet and Sarah Drew, were working in the harvest-field [1] when a great storm broke. John raked together some sheaves of wheat, behind which the lovers crouched for protection. Presently there came so loud a crack that heaven itself seemed rent asunder. As soon as the first terror was over the labourers shouted to one another, and those that were nearest the lovers, hearing no sound, went to the place where they lay. "They first saw a little smoke, and after, this faithful pair; John with one arm about his Sarah's neck, and the other held over her face as if to screen her from the lightning. They were struck dead, and already grown stiff and cold in this tender posture."

The village people thought that this sudden death must be a judgment for sin, and were ready to rise against the minister for allowing the couple Christian burial in one grave. Pope thereupon persuaded Lord Harcourt to erect a little monument over the lovers, and himself wrote a couple of epitaphs.[2] The first was considered too recondite

[1] In the account sent to Lady Mary the lovers were haymakers, who sheltered behind haycocks. As the incident is reported as having taken place on the last day of July, it might be thought that the "haysel" would be over and the harvest not yet begun.

[2] The two epitaphs are subjoined:

I.

When Eastern lovers feed the funeral fire,
On the same pile the faithful fair expire;
Here pitying Heaven that virtue mutual found,
And blasted both, that it might neither wound.
Hearts so sincere th' Almighty saw well pleased,
Sent His own lightning, and the victims seized.

for the country people, and the second, the "religious" one, was adopted. Truth to say, neither is an inspired piece of work, and perhaps it was the ornate manner in which the incident was recounted and the bald platitudes of the accompanying verses that moved Lady Mary to merriment and parody in her letter of acknowledgment. Pope had pompously assured her that "the greatest honour people of this low degree could have was to be remembered on a little monument; unless you will give them another—that of being honoured with a tear from the finest eyes in the world. I know you have tenderness; you must have it; it is the very emanation of good sense and virtue; the finest minds, like the finest metals, dissolve the readiest."

Lady Mary was in a capricious mood when she sat down to answer this letter. Having no illusions about hay-makers or their methods of courtship, she tore away the web of sentiment that the poet had woven around the rustic tragedy. She did not imagine that the lovers were either wiser or more virtuous than their neighbours. Nor did she suppose for a moment that their sudden death was a reward of their mutual virtue, as Pope suggested

II.

Think not, by rigorous judgment seized,
A pair so faithful could expire;
Victims so pure Heaven saw well pleased,
And snatched them in celestial fire.

Live well, and fear no sudden fate.
  When God calls virtue to the grave
Alike His justice soon or late:
  Mercy alike to kill or save.
Virtue unmoved can hear the call,
And face the flash that melts the ball.

in his epitaph. Her own mock-epitaph is a scathing satire upon the sentimental vapourings of Pope, and is certainly better worth printing than his own effusions :

> Here lie John Hughes [1] and Sarah Drew ;
> Perhaps you'll say, what's that to you?
> Believe me, friend, much may be said
> On that poor couple that are dead.
> On Sunday next they should have married:
> But see how oddly things are carried ;
> On Thursday last it rained and lightened,
> These tender lovers, sadly frightened,
> Sheltered beneath the cocking hay
> In hopes to pass the time away.
> But the bold thunder found them out
> (Commissioned for that end, no doubt),
> And, seizing on their trembling breath,
> Consigned them to the shades of death.
> Who knows if 'twas not kindly done?
> For, had they seen the next year's sun,
> A beaten wife and cuckold swain
> Had jointly cursed the marriage chain.
> Now they are happy in their doom,
> For Pope has wrote upon their tomb.

At Stanton Harcourt Pope finished his fifth volume of Homer, as was recorded on a window-pane of the room in which he worked. He was now nearing the end of his gigantic task, and found, to his satisfaction, "that daring work less and less censured, and the last volumes generally allowed to be better done than the former, which yet no way raises my vanity, since it is only allowing me not to grow worse and worse."

On October 8 Pope was enjoying what he calls

[1] Lady Mary has altered the name of the hero, in order to make her line scan.

his "bower" in Oakley Wood, Cirencester, and the company of Lord Bathurst[1] and Gay. In a letter to the Blounts he gives a rosy account of his surroundings and mode of life.

"I write an hour or two every morning, then ride out a-hunting upon the Downs, eat heartily, talk tender sentiments with Lord Bathurst, or draw plans for houses and gardens, open avenues, cut glades, plant firs, contrive water-works—all very fine and beautiful in our imagination. At night we play at commerce, and play pretty high. I do more: I bet too; for I am really rich, and must throw away my money, if no deserving friend will use it. I like this course of life so well that I am resolved to stay here till I hear of somebody's being in town that is worth coming after."

[1] Allen, Lord Bathurst (1684–1775), was a pleasant companion and an ideal host. He was one of the dozen Peace peers, created in 1711, to form a Tory majority in the House of Lords. He made no great figure in politics, but enjoyed life, and helped his friends and guests to do the same. Lord Lansdowne said of him (in a letter to Mrs. Pendarves): "Lord Bathurst can best describe to you the ineffable joys of that country where happiness only reigns. He is a native of it." Bathurst had a strong constitution and abounding vitality. In his old age Sterne said of him: "This nobleman is a prodigy; for at eighty-five he has all the wit and promptness of a man of thirty. A disposition to be pleased, and the power to please others beyond whatever I knew, added to which a man of learning, courtesy, and feeling." Sterne also relates the following story of him: "About two years before his death, having some friends with him at his country-seat, and being loth to part with them one night, his son, the Lord Chancellor, objected to sitting up any longer, and left the room. As soon as he was gone the lively old peer said, 'Come, my good friends, since the *old gentleman* is gone to bed, I think we may venture to crack another bottle.'"

CHAPTER XXII

1719

Move to Twickenham—Relations with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu—Theories of Gardening

MAWSON'S New Buildings was but a shabby address for a celebrated poet, and in the spring of this year Pope thought of building himself a house in or near London. But from this project he was dissuaded by his friends, more especially by Lord Bathurst, who warned him that saws and hammers, besides making a good deal of noise, possessed a curious trick of melting gold and silver. Finally, the poet contented himself with renting a small house at Twickenham, with five acres of land, which he proceeded to beautify in accordance with his own artistic taste. The house was pleasantly situated on the banks of the river, and the village of Twickenham was then the most fashionable country retreat within easy reach of London.

Pope intended to add to the house, but, fortunately for his purse, he never got beyond scribbling plans on the backs of envelopes. He found endless amusement, however, in laying out his grounds. His taste and knowledge, more especially with regard to

effects of light and shade, distance and grouping, were in advance of his time, and his advice was sought by the great men of his acquaintance who were engaged in "improving" their own places, such as Lord Burlington, Lord Bathurst, and Lord Oxford.[1]

As early as 1713 Pope had written an article on Gardening in *The Guardian*, and now, for the first time, he had a free hand in putting his theories into practice. The formal style of gardening had fallen out of favour, and the stately pleasaunces, with their pleached alleys, yew-hedges and walled enclosures, were being "stubbed up" by the new school of "nature," or landscape gardeners, led by Kent and Bridgman. Though there were but "ten sticks" in the garden when he took the place, Pope "twisted and twirled and rhymed and harmonised it till it appeared two or three sweet little lawns, opening and opening beyond one another, and the whole surrounded with impenetrable woods."[2] Before he had finished with it the garden boasted, besides the famous Grotto, one large mount, two

[1] The charges against Lord Oxford had been dismissed, and he was released in 1717. He continued to attend the House of Lords, though he was excepted from the Act of Grace, and forbidden to appear at Court.

[2] Horace Walpole. After Pope's death Sir William Stanhope bought the villa. In 1760, to quote Walpole again, "He hacked and hewed these groves, wriggling a winding gravel walk through them with an edging of shrubs, in what they call the modern taste, and, in short, has desired the three lanes to walk in again—and now is forced to shut them out again by a wall, for there was not a Muse could walk there but she was spied by every country fellow that went by with a pipe in his mouth." In 1807 the villa became the property of Lady Howe, who pulled it down and built another house a hundred yards away.

small mounts, a quincunx, an obelisk, a shell temple, a wilderness, a grove, an orangery, and a garden house!

"The history of my transplantation and settlement, which you desire," wrote Pope to Jervas, who was still in Ireland, "would require a volume, were I to enumerate the many projects, difficulties, vicissitudes, and various fates attending that important part of my life: much more, should I describe the many draughts, elevations, profiles, perspective, etc., of every palace and garden proposed, intended, and happily raised, by the strength of that faculty wherein all great geniuses excel—imagination. At last, the gods and fates have fixed me on the borders of the Thames, in the districts of Richmond and Twickenham. It is here I hope to receive you, sir, returned from eternising the Ireland of this age. For you my structures rise; for you my colonnades extend their wings; for you my groves aspire, and roses bloom. . . . I cannot express how I long to renew our old intercourse and conversation, our morning conferences in bed in the same room, our evening walks in the park, our amusing voyages on the water, our philosophical suppers, our lectures, our dissertations, our gravities, our reveries, our fooleries, or what not. This awakens the memories of those who have made a part in all these—poor Parnell, Garth, Rowe!"[1]

At this time Pope was engaged in editing Parnell's "Remains" and writing an epitaph for Rowe's monument in Westminster Abbey. Next to Parnell and Rowe, Sir Samuel Garth, the best-natured of

[1] Parnell and Rowe had died in 1718, Garth in 1719.

men, had left Pope the truest concern for his loss. "His death was very heroical, and yet unaffected enough to have made a saint or philosopher famous. But ill tongues and worse hearts have treated his last moments as wrongfully as they did his life, with irreligion. You must have heard many tales on the subject; but, if ever there was a good Christian, without knowing himself to be so, it was Dr. Garth."[1]

In the summer of this year Pope was house-hunting at Twickenham for the Wortley Montagus. He discovered a villa belonging to Sir Godfrey Kneller which he thought would suit his friends, and there is a quaint letter on the subject from the painter, whose spelling was almost on a par with that of Mrs. Pope. Though an artist, he seems to have been a fairly keen hand at a bargain. Thus, on June 19, he writes to Pope:

"Sir,

"I am in towne, and have loucked for beds and bedsteads which must cost ten pounds a year. When I promised to provide them, you had maid no mention of the towne rates, which I am to pay, and will be 5 pounds a year at least, and which would be 15 pounds per annum with the beds; and that house did let for 45 a year when I bought it; so that all I have laid out being near 400 pound, would be done for nothing, of which you will consider and let me know your mind. . . ."

The writer concludes by sending his respects to "my Lady Mery Whortley."

[1] The best good Christian he, although he knows it not.
Farewell to London.

The simple-minded Sir Godfrey was a character in his way—ignorant, incredibly vain, and something of a butt to Pope and his friends. There is one letter from the poet to the painter which, considering Kneller's epistolary style, reads like an elaborate piece of sarcasm draped with a transparent veil of flattery. That Kneller would swallow anything Pope must have been aware when he thanked him for the pleasure of his letter, "which convinces me that, whatever another wise man can be, a wise and great painter, at least, can be above the stars when he pleases. The elevation of such a genius is not to be measured by the object it flies at: it soars far higher than its aim, and carries up the subject along with it. . . . I thought to compliment upon paper had been left to poets and lovers. Dryden says he has seen a fool think in your picture of him. And I have reason to say I have seen the least of mankind appear one of the greatest under your hands."

Pope had arranged that Kneller should paint Lady Mary's portrait,[1] and the picture, he assures the lady, dwells very near his heart, since he much preferred her present face to her past. "I know and thoroughly esteem yourself of this year," he explains. "I know no more of Lady Mary Pierrepont than to admire what I have heard of her, or be pleased with some fragments of hers, as I am with Sappho's. But now—I cannot say what I would say of you now. Only still give me cause to say

[1] Pope always alludes to the portrait as if it were commissioned for himself; but, whether it were painted for him or for Mr. Wortley, it eventually passed into the possession of Lady Mary's son-in-law, Lord Bute.

you are good to me, and allow me as much of your person as Sir Godfrey can help me to."

In order to give the lady as little trouble as possible, Sir Godfrey had arranged to draw her face with crayons, and finish it at her own house in a morning, afterwards transferring it to canvas. "This, I must observe," continues Pope, "is a manner in which they seldom draw any but crowned heads; and I observe it with secret pride and pleasure."

There is quite a lover-like ring about one or two brief notes which may be attributed to the same period. For example:

"It is not in my power [dear madam] to say what agitation the two or three words I wrote to you the other morning have given me. Indeed, I truly esteem you, and put my trust in you. I can say no more, and you would not have me."

Another *billet-doux* informs the lady that Sir Godfrey has come to town, and will wait on her in the morning. "He is really very good to me," it concludes; "I heartily wish you will be so too. But I submit to you in all things; nay, in the manner of all things: your own pleasure and your own time. Upon my word, I will take yours, and understand you as you would be understood, with a real respect and resignation when you deny me anything, and a hearty gratitude when you grant me anything. Your will be done! but God send it may be the same with mine."

This may have been only an elaborate game; yet it seems not improbable that Pope was trying, by means of this pseudo-intrigue, to heal the wound

that had been inflicted upon his heart or vanity by the Blounts. Nothing could have afforded him keener delight and gratification than to have it believed that he was *au mieux* with one of the most brilliant beauties of the day. This would indeed have been a triumph over the two country girls, who had made use of him, flouted his overtures, and treated him as though he were fit for nothing better than humdrum friendship.

In spite of his love-troubles, his ill health,[1] and his increasing boredom with Homer, Pope found strength and leisure to devote to the improvement of his new domain. He was so enchanted with his surroundings that he could not tear himself away for his usual tour of country houses. In September he was still at Twickenham, taking part in a consultation about the gardens of a house at Richmond which had been taken by the Prince of Wales. In a letter to Lord Bathurst he gives an amusing account of the various opinions enunciated by various experts in the course of the discussion. One declared that he would not have too much art in the design, for he considered that gardening was only sweeping nature. Another thought that gravel walks were not in good taste; a third insisted that there should not be one lime-tree in the whole plantation; a

[1] Pope had a severe fit of illness in the autumn of this year. He tells Martha Blount (on October 30) that he is being submitted to a very odd course of treatment for a violent pain in his side: "I mean a course of brickbats and tiles, which they apply to me piping hot, morning and night; and sure it is very satisfactory to one who loves architecture at his heart to be built round in his very bed. My body may properly at this time be called a human structure."



From an engraving by Caroline Watson after a painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller.

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU, 1720.



fourth would exclude horse-chestnuts, which he said were not trees but weeds; while Dutch elms were condemned by a fifth. There were some who could not bear evergreens, and called them "nevergreens," and others who disliked them only when they were cut into shapes, by what they described as "evergreen tailors."[1] "These, my lord," concludes Pope, "are our men of taste, who pretend to prove it by tasting little or nothing. We have the same sort of critics in poetry; one is fond of nothing but heroics, another cannot relish tragedies, another hates pastorals; all little wits delight in epigrams."

Even in mid-winter Twickenham still held its own as an earthly paradise. Pope declared that no place could be more delightful at that time of year. The situation was so airy and yet so warm that he thought himself in a kind of heaven, where the prospect was boundless and the sun his near neighbour. In a letter of invitation to his friend Broome, then newly married, Pope enlarges on the enchanted bowers, silver stream, opening avenues, rising mounts, and painted grottoes that are to delight the eyes of his guests. Broome is further enticed by a fancy sketch of the ease, the quiet, the contentment of soul and repose of body which he will feel when stretched in an elbow-chair, mum for his breakfast, chine and potatoes for dinner, and a dose of burnt wine to induce slumber; and all this without one sermon to preach, or any family duty to pay!

[1] In his article on gardening in *The Guardian* (September 29, 1713) Pope had given a jesting description of an eminent cook who beautified his country seat with a coronation dinner in greens, "where you see the Champion flourishing on horseback at one end of the table, and the Queen in perpetual youth at the other."

CHAPTER XXIII

1720

The End of the "Iliad"—Gay's Welcome from Greece—Criticisms—Ill Health and Low Spirits

THE year 1720 saw the completion of the translation of the "Iliad." The fifth and sixth volumes were issued to subscribers on May 12, and the whole work was dedicated, not to any noble patron, but to Congreve, who was a *persona grata* with both parties. Pope had long been looking forward to what he described as his deliverance from poetry and slavery, and, after the conclusion of his labours, declared his intention of retiring *a miles emeritus*. He pitied the poor poets who were to succeed him, and, if his gains were sufficient, he would gladly found a hospital, like that of Chelsea, for such of his tribe as were disabled in the Muses' service, or whose years required a dismissal from the unnatural task of rhyming themselves and others to death.

The completion of the work was hailed with another chorus of praise from friends, admirers, and the public generally. Gay celebrated the event with a spirited poem called "Mr. Pope's Welcome from

Greece. A copy of verses written by Mr. Gay upon Mr. Pope's having finished his translation of Homer's 'Iliad.'"[1] A few stanzas may be quoted, since they will serve to show the extent and variety of Pope's acquaintance at this time.

The chronicler imagines that the poet has long been absent from his native land, seeking adventures in Homer's country. His six years' labours being at an end, he has set sail for England, and as his ship passes up the Thames bonfires blaze and bones and cleavers ring. As he nears "proud London's spires," a huge concourse of goodly dames and courteous knights swarms down to the quay, and the sky re-echoes to shouts of joy. The bard continues:

> What lady's that to whom he gently bends?
>   Who knows her not? Ah, those are Wortley's eyes.
> How art thou honoured, numbered with her friends,
>   For she distinguishes the good and wise.
> The sweet-tongued Murray[2] near her side attends:
>   Now to my heart the glance of Howard[3] flies;
> Now Hervey, fair of face,[4] I mark full well—
> With thee, youth's youngest daughter, sweet Lepell.[5]

[1] The original draft, which is in the British Museum, bears the following title: "Alexander Pope, his Safe Return from Troy. A Congratulatory Poem on his completing his Translation of Homer's 'Iliad.' In the manner of the beginning of the last canto of 'Ariosto.'"

[2] Grizel Baillie, who was married to Alexander Murray, of Stanhope. She was a pretty woman and a charming singer of old Scotch ballads. Mrs. Murray and Lady Mary Wortley were intimate friends at this time, but they quarrelled a couple of years later.

[3] Mrs. Howard, afterwards Lady Suffolk.

[4] John, Lord Hervey.

[5] Molly Lepell was married to Lord Hervey at this time, though the marriage was not announced till October.

I see two lovely sisters, hand in hand,
The fair-haired Martha and Teresa brown;
Madge Bellenden,[1] the tallest of the land;
And smiling Mary,[2] soft and fair as down.
Yonder I see the cheerful duchess[3] stand,
For friendship, zeal, and blithesome humours known.
Whence that loud shout in such a hearty strain?
Why, all the Hamiltons are in her train.

See next the decent Scudamore[4] advance
With Winchelsea[5] still meditating song,
With her Miss Howe[6] came there by chance,
Nor knows with whom, nor why she comes along.
Far off from these see Santlow[7] famed for dance,
And frolick Bicknell,[8] and her sister young,
With other names by me not to be named,
Much loved in private, not in public famed.

After the female band retires, the singer imagines that he sees famous Buckingham "who knows to strike the living lyre," and impetuous Bathurst, "whom you and I strive whom shall love the most." Next:

[1] Elder daughter of Lord Bellenden.

[2] Younger sister of Margaret, and one of the most beautiful of the maids-of-honour. She married Colonel Campbell, who became Duke of Argyll in 1761.

[3] The Duchess of Hamilton, whose husband had been killed in the duel with Lord Mohun in 1712.

[4] Wife of Viscount Scudamore. She was a daughter of Simon, Lord Digby.

[5] The literary Lady Winchelsea, of whom mention has already been made.

[6] Sophia Howe, one of the flightiest of the maids-of-honour.

[7] Mrs. Santlow is described as a beautiful woman, a pleasing actress, and an admirable dancer. She is said to have been mistress to the great Duke of Marlborough. In the autumn of this year she married Booth the actor.

[8] Mrs. Bicknell was a clever comedy actress, who had played in *The What-dye-call't?* and *Three Hours after Marriage.* Her sister was known as Miss Younger.

See generous Burlington with goodly Bruce,[1]
(But Bruce comes wafted in a soft sedan),
Dan Prior[2] next, beloved by every muse,
And friendly Congreve, unreproachful man!
(Oxford by Cunningham[3] hath sent excuse):
See hearty Watkins[4] comes with cup and can,
And Lewis,[5] who has never friend forsaken;
And Laughton[6] whispering, asks—Is Troy town taken?

Bold Warwick[7] comes, of free and honest mind;
Bold, generous Craggs,[8] whose heart was ne'er disguised;
Ah why, sweet St. John,[9] cannot I thee find?
St. John for every social virtue prized—
Alas! to foreign climates he's confined,
Or else to see thee here I well surmised:
Thou, too, my Swift, dost breathe Bœotian air,
When wilt thou bring back wit and humour here?

Harcourt[10] I see, for eloquence renowned,
The mouth of justice, oracle of law!
Another Simon is beside him found,
Another Simon like as straw to straw.

[1] Lord Bruce, afterwards Earl of Aylesbury. He had married a sister of Lord Burlington.

[2] Matthew Prior, the poet. He died at his patron Lord Oxford's house in the following year.

[3] Alexander Cunningham, M.P. for Renfrewshire.

[4] Henry Watkins. He had been Secretary to the Dutch Embassy. He was a favourite with Bolingbroke.

[5] Erasmus Lewis, Secretary to Lord Oxford. He corresponded with Swift, and arranged for the publication of "Gulliver's Travels."

[6] Possibly John Lawton, who was married to a sister of Lord Halifax.

[7] The young Earl of Warwick, son of the Countess who married Addison. He died the following year.

[8] James Craggs, the Secretary of State. He died the following February.

[9] Lord Bolingbroke.

[10] Simon, created Viscount Harcourt in 1711. He was made Lord Chancellor in 1712. His son Simon died this year.

How Lansdowne[1] smiles with lasting laurel crowned!
What mitred prelate there commands our awe?
See Rochester[2] approving nods the head,
And ranks one modern with the mighty dead.

Carlton[3] and Chandos[4] thy arrival grace;
Hanmer,[5] whose eloquence the unbiassed sways;
Harley,[6] whose goodness opens in his face,
And shows his heart the seat where virtue stays.
Ned Blount[7] advances next with hasty pace,
In haste, yet sauntering, hearty in his ways,
I see the friendly Carylls[8] come by dozens,
Their wives, their uncles, daughters, sons, and cousins.

Arbuthnot there I see, in physic's art
As Galen learned, or famed Hippocrate;
Whose company drives sorrow from the heart,
As all disease his medicines dissipate:
Kneller amid the triumph bears his part,
Who could (were mankind lost) anew create.
What can th' extent of his vast soul confine?
A painter, critic, engineer, divine![9]

Thee Jervas hails, robust and debonair,
"Now have we conquered Homer, friends," he cries;

[1] Pope's poetical friend, George Granville, Lord Lansdowne.
[2] Bishop Atterbury.
[3] Henry Boyle, Lord Carlton. There is an allusion to Carlton's calm sense in the "Epilogue to the Satires."
[4] The princely Duke of Chandos, who was supposed to be the original of Timon, in the Fourth Moral Essay.
[5] Sir Thomas Hanmer, Speaker in the House of Commons in the last Parliament of Queen Anne.
[6] Lord Harley, afterwards second Earl of Oxford.
[7] Pope's early correspondent, Edward Blount, of Blagdon.
[8] John Caryll had persuaded a number of his relations and friends to subscribe for the "Iliad."
[9] The praise of Kneller was partly ironical.

Dartneuf,[1] gay joker, joyous Ford,[2] is there,
And wondering Maine, so fat with laughing eyes
(Gay, Maine, and Cheney,[3] boon companions dear;
Gay fat, Maine fatter, Cheyney huge of size).
Yea, Dennis, Gildon (hearing thou hast riches),
And honest, hatless Cromwell, with red breeches.

. . . .

Yonder, I see among th' expecting crowd
Evans,[4] with laugh jocose, and tragic Young;[5]
High-buskined Booth,[6] grave Mawbert,[7] wandering Frowde,[8]
And Titcombe's belly waddles slow along.
See Digby[9] faints at Southerne talking loud.
Yea, Steele and Tickell mingle in the throng,
Tickell, whose skiff (in partnership, they say)
Set forth for Greece, but foundered on the way.

[1] Charles Dartneuf, Paymaster of the Board of Works, whose epicurean tastes were satirised by Pope in the "First Imitation of Horace."

> Each mortal has his pleasure; none deny
> Scarsdale his bottle, Darty his ham-pie.

[2] Charles Ford, an Irishman, and a great favourite of Swift, with whom he corresponded regularly.

[3] Dr. George Cheyne, the popular Bath physician, who was a specialist on diet.

[4] Dr. Abel Evans, of St. John's College, Oxford. He was famous for his epigrams:

> Songs, sonnets, epigrams, the winds uplift,
> And whisk 'em back to Evans, Young, and Swift.
> *The Dunciad.*

[5] Dr. Edward Young, the poet and dramatist.

[6] Barton Booth, the tragedian.

[7] James Francis Mawbert, a portrait-painter. He copied the portraits of all the English poets he could find, while Dryden, Wycherly, Congreve, and Pope sat to him.

[8] Philip Frowde, author of a couple of tragedies.

> Let Jervas gratis paint, and Frowde
> Save threepence and his soul.
> *Farewell to London.*

[9] The Hon. Robert Digby, second son of William, Lord Digby. He was a chronic invalid, and died in 1726. Pope wrote his epitaph.

Lo, the two Doncastles[1] in Berkshire known!
Lo, Bickford,[2] Fortescue[3] of Devon land!
Lo, Tooker, Eckershall,[4] Sykes, Rawlinson!
See hearty Morley[5] take thee by the hand!
Ayres, Graham, Buckridge, joy thy voyage done;
Lo, Stonor,[6] Fenton, Caldwell, Ward, and Broome;[7]
Lo, thousands more, but I want rhyme and room!

How loved, how honoured thou! Yet be not vain!
And sure thou art not, for I hear thee say—
"All this, my friends, I owe to Homer's strain,
On whose strong pinions I exalt my lay.
What from contending cities did he gain?
And what rewards his grateful country pay?
None, none was paid—why, then, all this for me?
These honours, Homer, had been just to thee."

The "Welcome" is a fine tribute of friendship, but the reverse side of the medal must not be ignored. Dissentient voices there were, shrill and strident, though few. With hysterical vehemence, Dennis continued to scream unmeasured abuse of everything and anything that his enemy published. In his "Remarks upon Mr. Pope's Translation of Homer" (Curll, 1717) Dennis had quoted St. Evremond's saying that there is no nation where the men have more courage, the women more beauty, and both

[1] Pope's old friends, the Dancastles of Binfield.
[2] A Devonshire worthy, one of the Bickfords of Dunsland.
[3] William Fortescue, afterwards Master of the Rolls, who was always willing to give Pope legal advice gratis.
[4] James Eckershall, who advised the poet in his financial speculations.
[5] "Hearty Morley" may have been the brother-in-law of Sir George Brown, and husband of "Thalestris," the Amazon of "The Rape of the Lock."
[6] Probably Thomas Stonor, of Stonor Park.
[7] Broome and Fenton are mentioned elsewhere. The other names cannot be identified with any exactness.

sexes more wit than in England, but there is no country where good taste is so rare. The people of England had chosen for their favourite a little, foolish, abject thing, who had written two farces and a comic poem, without one jest in the three. His translation of Homer was barbarous, flat, obscure, affected, and unnatural, where the original was pure, clear, lofty, simple, and unaffected. So far from making Homer talk English, he made him talk Irish, and Lintot might be said to buy more bears and sell more bulls between the Temple gates than all the stockjobbers did in 'Change Alley.[1] "The Pegasus of the little gentleman is not the steed that Homer rode, but a blind, stumbling Kentish post-horse, which neither walks, trots, paces, nor runs; but is upon an eternal Canterbury, and often stumbles, and often falls."

Dennis regards this "popular scribbler" as an enemy to "my king, my country, my religion, and to that liberty which has been the sole felicity of my life." He is at once Whig and Tory, Papist and pillar of the Church of England, a writer of *Guardians* and *Examiners*, a rhymester without judgment or reason, and a Jesuitical pretender to truth. This barbarous wretch, though perpetually boasting of humanity and good-nature, is actually a lurking, waylaying coward, a stabber in the dark, and above all a traitor-friend, who has betrayed all mankind. He is a professor of the worst religion, which he laughs at, while observing the maxim that "no faith is to be kept with heretics."

[1] In another place Dennis says that Pope had sent abroad as many "bulls" as his namesake, Pope Alexander.

Coarse and brutal abuse of this kind should have given Pope but little concern, even though there might be a grain of truth here and there among the rubbish. Perhaps he smarted more under a lighter bit of satire (1719), inscribed and recommended to "that little gentleman of great vanity who has just put forth a fourth volume of Homer." In this Pope is described as—

> An unfledged author, flushed with praise,
> Sprung from light minds by superficial lays;
> Who the gay crowd, with tinkling chimes,
> Has skill to please, and fashionable rhymes.

After alluding to the evil treatment of Homer by "bold Chapman and dull Ogilby," the satirist continues:

> Gay Pope succeeds, and joins his skill with these,
> He smoothes him o'er, and gives him grace and ease,
> And makes him fine—the beaux and belles to please.
> Thus is our wit and thus our learning tried!
> Thus Britons write and thus are qualified!

The early part of this year was spent in the quiet and retirement necessitated by hard work and ill-health. In February Caryll wrote to ask for news of the beau-monde and of Parnassus, but Pope, as usual, had none to tell. He had not seen a play for twelve months, nor attended any opera or public assembly. "I am the common topic of ridicule as a country lout; and if, once a month, I trudge to town in a horseman's coat, I am stared at, every question I ask, as the most ignorant of all rustics." His indisposition has been so great that such an alteration had taken place in his constitution as deserved to be

called a ruin rather than a revolution, to say nothing of a dejection of spirits that had destroyed in him all vivacity and cheerfulness.

About this time it seems to have occurred to Teresa Blount that she had treated Pope rather badly, and she wrote to ask his forgiveness.[1] That he thought himself in a dangerous way may be gathered from the tone of his reply :

" As for forgiveness, I am approaching, I hope, to that time and condition in which everybody ought to give it, and to ask it of all the world. I sincerely do so with regard to you ; and beg pardon also for that very fault of which I taxed others—my vanity, which made me so resenting.

" We are too apt to resent things too highly, till we come to know, by some great misfortune or other, how much we are born to endure ; and as for me, you need not suspect of resentment a soul which can feel nothing but grief.

" I desire extremely to see you both again ; yet I believe I shall see you no more ; and I sincerely hope, as well as think, both of you will be glad of it. I therefore wish you may each of you find all you desired I could be, in some one whom you may like better to see."

In another brief note to Teresa we find the poet actually acknowledging that he has been in the wrong, and expressing himself with a humility which was entirely foreign to his nature. " Nothing," he complains, " could be so bitter to a tender mind as to displease most where he would (and ought in

[1] This letter is undated, but it is attributed to this, or the preceding year.

gratitude) to please best. I am faithfully yours: unhappy enough to want a great deal of indulgence; but sensible I deserve it less and less from my disagreeable carriage. I am truly grateful to you for pardoning it so often, not able to know when I can overcome it, and only able to wish you could bear me better."

CHAPTER XXIV

1720

The South Sea Bubble

IN the spring and summer of this year the whole nation ran mad over what would now be called the South Sea "boom." France had set the fashion in bubble companies, dazzled by the showy financial methods of John Law, of Lauriston.[1] Law, it will be remembered, had obtained the monopoly of the Mississippi trade for a company that had volunteered to take over the National Debt of France. This was in 1717, and the company prospered till 1719, when its operations were extended, and the stock rapidly increased in value. The Government was relieved from the dread of bankruptcy, immense fortunes were made—or lost—and John Law was created Controller-General of the finance of France. By January 1720, however, the shares had begun to fall, and, though this was attributed to the fact that a number of speculators were selling in order to buy a new issue, the fall continued, and Law gradually lost his hold upon the public, though the Regent supported him almost to the last.

[1] John Law (1671-1729) had been imprisoned and sentenced to death in 1694 for killing a man in a duel. He escaped from prison and fled to France. After the bursting of the Mississippi Bubble he was obliged to fly from France. He died in Venice.

An imitation of the Mississippi scheme was started in England about the end of 1719, in connection with the South Sea Company. The projectors of the new monopoly were to take over the Government loans and annuities, whereby it was expected that the National Debt would be reduced and public credit restored. The scheme was supported by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Aislabie), Lord Sunderland, the two Craggses, and other leading statesmen. Walpole was one of the few who actively opposed the project; but he was then out of office, and his remonstrances had no effect.

As early as 1716 Pope had bought South Sea stock for himself and the Blounts, and had further speculated in lottery tickets, payable in annuities. Early in March 1720 he wrote to tell Martha that he had borrowed money on their lottery orders in order to buy more South Sea stock at 180, and expresses his gratification that the shares have since risen to 184. Later in the month he wrote to James Eckershall, who acted for him in these transactions, that he heard such glowing reports of advantages to be gained by some project or other in the stocks, that his spirit was up with double zeal, and he could not resist the chance of trying to enrich himself.

"I assure you," he continues, "my own keeping a coach and six is not more in my head than the pleasure I shall take in seeing Mrs. Eckershall in her equipage. To be serious, I hope you have sold the lottery orders, that the want of ready money may be no longer an impediment to our buying in the stock, which was very unlucky at the time. . . . Pray let us do something or other which you judge the

fairest prospect. I am equal as to what stock, so you like it. Let but Fortune favour us, and the world will sure admire our prudence. If we fail, let's e'en keep the mishap to ourselves. But 'tis ignominious (in this age of hope and golden mountains) not to venture."

The stock continued to rise in almost miraculous fashion. At the end of April it had risen from 330 to 380, and about this time Pope replied to an inquiry respecting his speculations:

"The question you ask about the fair ladies' gains, and my own, is not easily answered. There is no gain till the stock is sold, which neither theirs nor mine is. So that, instead of wallowing in money, we never wanted more for the uses of life, which is a pretty general case with most of the adventurers. . . One day we were worth two or three thousand, and the next day not above three parts of the sum. For my own particular, I have very little in; the ladies are much richer than I, but how rich, as you see, there is no telling by any certain rule of arithmetic."

Meanwhile, a number of parasite companies had sprung up, and 'Change Alley had become the resort of fashion. By the middle of June there were over a hundred bubble companies in existence, despite a proclamation against such unlicensed schemes, and the shares of all were at a premium. There were promising schemes for developing the national fisheries, for making English china, for cleansing the streets and supplying water to the metropolis, besides such chimerical projects as discovering the secret of perpetual motion, casting nativities, or extracting butter from beech-nuts, silver

from lead, and oil from poppies. In May Steele was vainly trying to expose the true nature of the gamble in his paper, *The Theatre*, while Swift compared 'Change Alley to a gulf in the South Seas:

> Subscribers here by thousands float,
>   And jostle one another down,
> Each paddling in his leaky boat,
>   And here they fish for gold, and drown.

But no one paid any heed to the warning voices. Poor Gay, who had made a thousand pounds by his poems, invested the whole of his little fortune in South Sea stock, and at one time found himself worth £2,000—on paper. His friends urged him to sell out at least as much as would secure him a daily clean shirt and joint of mutton, but he held on to the last, and lost his all.

"The London language and conversation is, I find, quite changed," wrote Mr. Robert Digby to Pope on July 9. "I am pleased with the thoughts of seeing nothing but a general good-humour when I come to town; I rejoice in the universal riches I hear of, in the thought of their having this effect. They tell me you was soon content; and that you cared not for such an increase as others wished for you. By this account, I judge you the richest man in the South Sea, and I congratulate you accordingly."

On August 7 the South Sea stock touched its highest point, 950; but by the middle of the month the fall had begun—a mere accidental "slump," as it was supposed. On August 22 Pope wrote to inform his neighbour, Lady Mary Wortley, that she might depend upon it as a certain gain to buy South Sea

stock at the present price, which would assuredly rise in some weeks or less. "I can be as sure of this as the nature of any such thing will allow, from the first and best hands, and therefore have despatched the bearer with all speed to you." Unfortunately for herself, Lady Mary took this advice, and invested not only her own money, but also a sum which a French admirer, M. Rémond, had entrusted to her, in order that she might speculate on his behalf. The rapid fall, which began about the end of August, took her and others by surprise; the money was lost, and Rémond, who refused to accept his ill fortune, tried to frighten her into making good his losses by threatening to send certain indiscreet letters to her husband. She probably confided her trouble to Pope, and it will be seen hereafter what use he made of his knowledge.

The directors of the South Sea Company helped to bring about their own downfall by trying to snuff out the unauthorised minor ventures. The pricking of these lesser bubbles presumably opened the eyes of the public to the real character of the parent company, since by the end of September South Sea stock had dropped to 175, and ruin was widespread. Pope put a good face on the matter, and gave out that he had retired with at least a part of his gains, but there is no means of knowing whether he was speaking the truth. He always disliked being pitied, and, even if he had lost heavily, as rumour reported, he would have done his best to conceal the fact.[1] Writing to Atterbury on September 23, he says that

[1] See the letter to Eckershall, in which Pope says, "If we fail, let's e'en keep the mishap to ourselves."

he has some cause to look upon the bishop as a prophet.

"The fate of the South Sea scheme has, much sooner than I expected, verified what you told me. Most people thought the time would come, but no man prepared for it. . . . Methinks God has punished the avaricious, as He often punishes sinners, in their own way, in the very sin itself: the thirst of gain was their crime; that crime continued became their punishment and ruin. As for the few who have the good fortune to remain with half what they imagined they had (among whom is your humble servant), I would have them sensible of their felicity, and convinced of the truth of old Hesiod's maxim, who, after half his estate was swallowed up by the *directors* of those days, resolved that half to be *more than the whole*."

Atterbury was of opinion that, had the project taken root and flourished, it must in time have overturned the constitution. Three or four hundred millions was such a weight, that whichever way it leaned it must have borne down all before it. Moralising on the subject in a letter to Pope, he dwells on the point that should console his friend under his ill luck. "Had you got all that you have lost beyond what you have ventured, consider that these superfluous gains would have sprung from the ruin of several families that now want necessaries! A thought under which a good and good-natured man that grew rich by such means, could not, I persuade myself, be easy."

Pope seized on the moral aspect of the question with characteristic avidity. He did not wish it to be

thought that he had lost on his venture, because that would have given people a low opinion of his shrewdness, but he allowed his friends to understand that he had made little or nothing, and seemed to think that this would almost justify him in posing as a philanthropist. Thus, he tells Caryll (October 28) that he has not been hurt by these times or fates, and that the ladies in Bolton Street were still gainers, even at the low ebb to which the stock had fallen.

"The vast inundation of the South Sea has drowned all except a few unrighteous men, contrary to the deluge; and it is some comfort to me I am not one of those, even in my afflictions. It is a serious satisfaction to me to reflect that I am not the richer for the calamities of others, which, as the world goes, must have been the case nine times in ten."

This attitude seems to have been greatly admired by Pope's friends, who did not perceive that he had entered into a wild-cat speculation purely with the intention of increasing his fortune, and that his losses were due not to his own virtue but to the fact that he did not sell out in time. Again, if he had really retained half of what he thought he had won, how could he reflect with satisfaction on the fact that he was not the richer for the calamities of others? The plain truth was that Pope had caught the Stock Exchange fever, had speculated and lost; but he desired to pose as the sensible man who had contrived to get out of the scrape without material damage, and also as the righteous moralist who refused to benefit himself at the expense of his fellows.

More honest and more manly was the attitude of Gay, who, though at first so much cast down at the loss of his fortune that for a time his life was in danger, presently recovered his spirits, and addressed a rhymed epistle to his friend Snow, in which he ridicules his own folly :

> Why did 'Change Alley waste thy precious hours
> Among the fools who gaped for golden showers?
> No wonder if we found some poets there,
> Who live on fancy, and can feed on air;
> No wonder they were caught by South Sea schemes,
> Who ne'er enjoyed a guinea but in dreams;
> No wonder that their third subscriptions sold
> For millions of imaginary gold.

CHAPTER XXV

1721

"Epistle to James Craggs"—Swift's Manifesto—Proposed Edition of Shakespeare—Parnell's "Remains"—"Epistle to Lord Oxford"

THE South Sea disaster was followed by many changes, social and political, and the consequences were far-reaching. Robert Knight, the cashier of the company, fled to Belgium; Aislabie, late Chancellor of the Exchequer, was disgraced and expelled from the House; the South Sea directors were removed from all public offices; a committee was appointed to inquire into the whole matter, and finally Walpole assumed the reins of Government. The Prince of Wales, the king's mistresses, and other influential persons being involved in the Bubble speculations, there were difficulties in the way of a full and searching investigation, and it was found impossible to bring the directors, or the absconding cashier, to justice. Among the discredited ministers were the Craggses, father and son, the former Postmaster-General, the latter Secretary of State. James Craggs the younger, who was a neighbour and intimate friend of Pope's,

died of smallpox on February 16, 1721, while his father died in a (so-called) lethargic fit on March 16, just before the secret committee was to report on his case. He was proved to have received a bribe from the South Sea directors of £40,000, and his executors were compelled to refund all the money he had made since December 1, 1719.

Pope was deeply affected by the loss of the younger Craggs, who had offered him a pension and shown him every favour. The poet, while refusing the pension, had consented to apply to his ministerial friend should he ever be in want of £500. Craggs took a house in Twickenham in the summer of 1720, and asked Pope to find him a "polite scholar," by whose conversation and instruction he might improve his defective education. Pope recommended his own friend and future colleague, Elijah Fenton,[1] for the post, and in May 1720 had written to Fenton:

"I am now commissioned to tell you that Mr. Craggs will expect you on the rising of Parliament, which will be as soon as he can receive you in the manner he would receive a man *de belles lettres*, that is, tranquillity and full leisure. I dare say your way of life, which, in my taste, will be the best in the world, and with one of the best men in the world, must prove highly to your contentment. And I must add, it will be still the more a joy to me, as I shall reap a peculiar advantage

[1] Elijah Fenton (1683-1730). He published some poems as early as 1707, wrote a fairly successful tragedy, *Mariamne*, produced in 1723, and edited Milton and Waller. He is only remembered now through his collaboration with Pope in the translation of the "Odyssey."

from the good I shall have done in bringing you together, by seeing it in my own neighbourhood. Mr. Craggs has taken a house close by mine, whither he proposes to come in three weeks. In the meantime I heartily invite you to live with me, where a frugal and philosophical diet for a time may give you a higher relish of that elegant way of life you will enter into after."

The death of Craggs put an end to this arrangement, and Pope had to mourn one of his truest friends. "There never lived a more worthy nature," he wrote, "a more disinterested mind, and more open and friendly temper, than Mr. Craggs. A little time, I doubt not, will clear up a character which the world will learn to value and admire when it has none such remaining in it." The friendship between the minister and the poet is commemorated by Pope's brief "Epistle to James Craggs," which was written after Craggs was made Secretary of State for War in 1717. There seems to have been some suggestion that, in consequence of his promotion, the Secretary would be ashamed of his literary friend. After eulogising honesty and candour in the opening lines of the "Epistle," Pope exhorts Craggs to—

> Scorn to gain a friend by servile ways,
> Nor wish to lose a foe these virtues raise;
> But candid, free, sincere, as you began,
> Proceed—a minister, but still a man.
> Be not (exalted to whate'er degree)
> Ashamed of any friend, not ev'n of me:
> The patriot's plain, but untrod path, pursue;
> If not, 'tis I must be ashamed of you.

There is a gap in the correspondence between Pope and Swift extending from 1716 to 1721. On January 10, 1721, the dean addressed a long letter, or more properly manifesto, to his friend, which Pope said that he never received, and it is possible that it was never sent. At this time Swift was bitterly discontented with his position in Dublin, and heartily sick of his retirement. His domestic affairs had been embroiled by the presence in Ireland of poor "Vanessa,"[1] and the consequent jealousy of Stella. Further, he had got into trouble with the authorities over his "Proposal for the use of Irish Manufactures," published in 1720. In his letter to Pope, Swift describes his former relations with the Whigs and Tories, his endeavour to serve his country, and the persecutions to which he had been subjected, and gives a *résumé* of his political creed. He seems to have desired that the letter should be made public in England, either through the medium of print, or by being shown to influential persons of the dominant party. It is evident that he had not yet abandoned the hope of being recalled, and again allowed to have a finger in the political pie, and this *apologia* may have been intended to clear the way for the desired *rapprochement*. A few points from the document are worth quoting. Swift reminds his friend that he left town about ten weeks before the queen's death, and retired into Berkshire. Almost directly after the downfall of his Tory friends he had returned to Ireland, where he had ever since remained in the utmost privacy.

[1] Esther Vanhomrigh, who had followed Swift to Ireland, and died there in 1723.

"I neither know the names nor numbers of the royal family which now reigns, further than the Prayer-book informs me. I cannot tell who is Chancellor, who are Secretaries, nor with what nations we are at peace or war." He admits that he had written some memorials of the last four years of Queen Anne's reign, as necessary materials to qualify himself for the office of Historiographer, which was then designed for him. But as it was at the disposal of a person (the Duke of Shrewsbury) who was lacking in steadiness and sincerity, he had disdained to accept of it.[1] These papers he had been digesting into order, one sheet at a time, not daring to venture any further lest the humour of searching and seizing papers should revive.

"I have written in this kingdom," he continues, "a discourse to persuade the wretched people to wear their own manufactures instead of those from England. This treatise soon spread very fast, being agreeable to the sentiments of the whole nation, except of those gentlemen who had employments, or were expectants; upon which a person in great office here immediately took the alarm."[2]

Swift explains that he formerly delivered his thoughts very freely, but never affected to be a

[1] This is inaccurate. Swift continued to solicit the office until it was filled up, although he knew that it was at the disposal of the Duke of Shrewsbury.

[2] This was Lord Chancellor Middleton. He directed the Chief Justice to proceed against the printer. The jury brought him in not guilty, but the judge sent them back nine times, till, wearied out, they left the matter to the mercy of the judge, by a special verdict. But the trial of the verdict was postponed from one term till another till at last the Duke of Grafton, Lord-Lieutenant by Swift's interest, granted a *noli prosequi*.

councillor. "I was humbled enough to see myself so far outdone by the Earl of Oxford in my own trade as a scholar, and too good a courtier not to discover his contempt of those who would be men of importance out of their own sphere. Besides, to say the truth, although I have known many great ministers ready enough to hear opinions, yet I have hardly seen one that would ever condescend to take advice."

Whatever opportunities his four years' attendance on the Tories had given him, Swift declares that he ought to find quarter from the other party, for many of whom he was a constant advocate. Lord Oxford would bear witness how often he (Swift) had pressed him in favour of Addison, Congreve, Rowe, and Steele. Indeed, it was a subject of raillery among the ministers that he never came to them without a Whig in his sleeve.

"I would infer from all this, that it is with great injustice I have this many years been pelted by your pamphleteers, merely upon account of some regard which the queen's last ministers were pleased to have for me. . . . If I have never discovered by my words, writings, or actions any party virulence or dangerous designs against the present powers;[1] if my friendship and conversation were equally shown among those who liked or disapproved the proceedings then at Court, and that I was known to be a common friend of all deserving persons of the latter sort when they were

[1] The distinguishing feature of Swift's party writings was virulence. Even Bolingbroke admitted that Swift "exhaled profusely black, corrosive vapours."

in distress, I cannot but think it hard that I am not suffered to run quietly among the common herd of people, whose opinions unfortunately differ from those which lead to favour and preferment."

As for his political creed, he had always declared himself against a popish successor to the Crown; he had a mortal antipathy to standing armies; he "adored" the wisdom of that Gothic institution which made Parliaments annual; and he abominated the scheme of politics which set up a moneyed interest in opposition to the landed interests, conceiving that the possessors of the soil are the best judges of what is for the advantage of the kingdom. These were some of the sentiments he had formerly held; his present opinions he dared not publish, since, however orthodox they might be at the time of writing, they might become criminal enough to bring him into trouble before midsummer. All he could reasonably hope to accomplish by this letter was to convince his friends and well-wishers that he had been neither so ill a subject nor so stupid an author as he had been represented by the virulence of libellers, who had fathered dangerous principles upon him which he had never maintained, and insipid productions which he was incapable of writing.

For about a year after the completion of the "Iliad" Pope rested on his Homeric laurels, but his was not a mind to remain long idle. In the course of this year (1721) he accepted a commission to edit a new edition of Shakespeare's works, for which Lintot was to pay him the modest sum of £217 2*s*., and he was also editing Parnell's

"Remains," for which he received £15. His leisure was still spent in work on his garden, the five acres proving an endless source of interest and occupation. On May 1 he wrote to Robert Digby:

"Our river glitters beneath an unclouded sun, at the same time that it retains the verdure of showers; our gardens are offering their first nosegays; our trees, like new acquaintance happily brought together, are stretching their arms to meet each other, and growing nearer and nearer every hour; the birds are paying their thanksgiving songs for the new habitations I have made for them. My building rises high enough to attract the eye and curiosity of the passenger from the river, where, upon beholding a mixture of beauty and ruin, he inquires what house is falling, or what church is rising. So little taste have our common Tritons of Vitruvius, whatever delight the poetical gods of the river may take in reflecting on their streams my Tuscan porticoes or Ionic pilasters."

Pope had not proceeded far with his Shakespearean editing before he realised that he had undertaken the work in too light-hearted a spirit, and without due regard to the difficulties of the task. We find him writing to some of his literary friends for advice and information, but it does not appear that he received much outside help. Atterbury, to whom he made early application, replied that he had found time to read some parts of Shakespeare which he was least acquainted with, but protested that in a hundred places he was quite unable to construe the dramatist. "The hardest part of Chaucer,"

he adds, "is more intelligible to me than some of these scenes, not merely through the faults of the edition, but the obscurity of the writer, for obscure he is, and a little (not a little) inclined now and then to bombast, whatever apology you may have contrived on that head for him. There are allusions in him to a hundred things of which I know nothing and can guess nothing. I protest Æschylus does not want a comment to me more than he does. So that I despair of doing you any considerable service."

Atterbury was one of the few friends of the poet who occasionally treated him to plain speaking. From his enemies Pope was accustomed to the foulest abuse, from his admirers to the most fulsome flattery. But the Bishop of Rochester spoke his mind with candour and impartiality. When Pope sent him his "Reflections on Pastoral Poetry," with some new matter inserted, he replied, with refreshing frankness, "In good earnest, as to that wanton way of ridiculing serious writers, you and I differ." In returning thanks for the poetical epitaph on Mr. Harcourt,[1] he remarks that, though he could like some of the verses if they were not Pope's, yet that, as they were his, he could hardly like any of them. "From you," he declares, "I expect something of a more perfect kind, and which, the oftener it is read, the more it will be admired. When you barely exceed other writers, you fall much beneath yourself: it is your misfortune now

[1] The Hon. Simon Harcourt, son of the Lord Chancellor Harcourt. The epitaph is inscribed on his monument in the church at Stanton Harcourt.

to write without a rival, and to be tempted by that means to be more careless than you would otherwise be in your composures."

It is amazing to find that, in the spring of this year, there was not only a cessation of hostilities between Pope and Dennis, but even something in the nature of a *rapprochement*. In April Dennis published two volumes of "Letters" by subscription. Pope subscribed for the books, and Dennis wrote (April 29) to tell him that they had been left for him at Mr. Congreve's lodgings, and adds: "As most of those letters were writ during the time I was so unhappy to be in a state of war with you, I was forced to maim and mangle at least ten of them, that no footsteps might remain of that quarrel." Pope replied that he had received the books, and left with Mr. Congreve the amount that he was in debt to Dennis. "I look upon myself to be much more so," he continues, "for the omissions you have been pleased to make in those letters in my favour, and sincerely join with you in the desire that not the least traces may remain of that difference between us, which indeed I am sorry for." Seven years later, when Dennis figured in "The Dunciad," this incident was recalled, Dennis declaring that Pope had subscribed as a proof of his repentance, and Pope asserting that Dennis was first touched with repentance "and with some guineas."

In September Pope paid his annual visit to Lord Bathurst at Cirencester. He wrote thence to Lady Mary Wortley to acknowledge, with becoming humility, a letter in which she had praised his garden.

"What an honour is it to my great walk," he exclaims, "that the finest woman in the world cannot stir from it! That walk extremely well answered the intent of its contriver when it detained her there. But for this accident, how had I despised and totally forgot my own little *colifichies* in the daily views of the noble scenes, opening and avenues of this immense design at Cirencester." In the name of Lord Bathurst, he invites her and her little daughter to journey thither, in order to spare him the trouble of description. For lodging, she need be under no manner of concern, for his lordship invites everybody he sees to stay in his house.

On October 21 Pope wrote to Lord Oxford to ask permission to dedicate the edition of Parnell's "Remains" to him, with "a paper of honest verses." He adds the somewhat remarkable statement that "It is the only dedication I ever writ, and shall be, whether you permit it or not:[1] for I will not bow the knee to a less man than my Lord Oxford, and I expect to see no greater in my time." This letter was accompanied by the famous "Epistle to Robert, Earl of Oxford," beginning—

> Such were the notes thy once-loved poet sung,
> Till death untimely stopped his tuneful tongue.

It is difficult to resist the temptation to quote the whole of this splendid tribute to a dead friend and a fallen minister. Whatever his real opinion of

[1] Pope had dedicated "The Rape of the Lock" to Miss Fermor, "Windsor Forest" to Lord Lansdowne, and his translation of the "Iliad" to Congreve.

Lord Oxford, Pope's imagination seems to have been fired by the statesman's firmness and courage in the hour of trial. He told Spence that "They were quite mistaken in his [Lord Oxford's] temper, who thought of getting rid of him by advising him to make his escape from the Tower. He would have sat out the storm, let the danger be what it would. He was a steady man, and had a great firmness of soul, and would have died unconcernedly; or perhaps, like Sir Thomas More, with a jest in his mouth."[1]

After a brief lament for Parnell, Pope reminds Oxford of the bygone days when—

> For him thou oft hast bid the world attend,
> Fond to forget the statesman in the friend;
> For Swift and him despised the farce of State,
> The sober follies of the wise and great;
> Dexterous the craning, fawning crowd to quit,
> And pleased to 'scape from flattery to wit.

Parnell is now alike careless of interest, fame, or fate, and—

> Perhaps forgets that Oxford e'er was great;
> Or, deeming meanest what we greatest call,
> Beholds thee glorious only in thy fall.

[1] On another occasion Pope told Spence that Lord Oxford was not a very capable minister, and had a good deal of negligence into the bargain. "He used to send trifling verses from the Court to the Scriblerus Club almost every day, and would come and talk idly with them almost every night, even when his all was at stake. He was muddled in his thoughts, and obscure in his manner of delivering them. He talked of business in so confused a manner that you did not know what he was about, and everything he went to tell you was in the epic way, for he always began in the middle."

If aught can touch the Immortals, cries the poet, it is a soul like Oxford's—

> A soul supreme, in each hard interest tried,
> Above all fraud, all passion and all pride,
> The rage of power, the blast of public breath,
> The lust of lucre, and the dread of death.

Then follows the noble and moving conclusion :

> In vain to deserts thy retreat is made ;
> The Muse attends thee to thy silent shade :
> 'Tis hers the brave man's latest steps to trace,
> Rejudge his acts, and dignify his grace,
> When Interest calls off all her sneaking train,
> And all the obliged desert, and all the vain ;
> She waits, or to the scaffold, or the cell,
> When the last lingering friend has bid farewell.
> Ev'n now she shades thy evening walk with bays
> (No hireling she, no prostitute to praise) ;
> Ev'n now, observant of the parting ray,
> Eyes the calm sunset of thy various day ;
> Through Fortune's cloud one truly great can see,
> Nor fears to tell that Mortimer is he.

In those Whig-ridden days it must have taken some courage to address such lines to a Tory ex-minister, who had been in danger of paying for his politics with his head. Lord Oxford seems to have been deeply moved and gratified—as well he might be—by this tribute, so different in character from the perfunctory fulsomeness of the customary dedication. He wrote from Brampton Castle on November 6 to express the great pleasure that it gave him to see that Mr. Pope preserved an old friend in his memory, since it is always agreeable to be remembered by those we value.

"But then, how much shame did it cause me,"

he proceeds, "when I read your very fine verses enclosed? My mind reproached me how far short I came of what your great friendship and delicate pen would partially describe me. You ask my consent to publish it: to what straits does this reduce me? I look back indeed to those evenings I have usefully and pleasantly spent with Mr. Pope, Mr. Parnell, Dean Swift, the doctor, etc. I should be glad the world knew you admitted me to your friendship, and, since your affection is too hard for your judgment, I am contented to let the world know how well Mr. Pope can write upon a barren subject."

CHAPTER XXVI

1722

Proposed Translation of the "Odyssey"—Commitment of Atterbury—Flirtation with Judith Cowper

WITH a view, presumably, to recouping himself for his losses over the South Sea Bubble, Pope now undertook to make an English version of the "Odyssey." From the first this seems to have been an uncongenial task, and it was felt by the poet's friends that he was wasting his genius upon what was little more than glorified hack-work. It was arranged, however, that his drudgery should be lightened by the assistance of his friends, Broome and Fenton. Broome had already been of service in translating the notes of Eustathius for the "Iliad," and had refused to accept any payment for his labour. Fenton was known to be a sound classical scholar and a writer of correct, though undistinguished, verse. The share that each took in the translation was to be carefully concealed.

"I must once more put you in mind," wrote Pope to Broome on February 10, "that the whole success of this affair will depend upon your secrecy.

There is nothing, you may be sure, I will not do to make the whole as finished and spirited as I am able, by giving the last touches. You do not need any man to make you a good poet. You need no more than what every good poet needs—time and diligence, and doing something every day."

This was a particularly busy year, since Pope was not only making arrangements for the translation of the "Odyssey," and annotating Shakespeare, but he was also preparing an edition of the works of John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, who died in 1721. In a letter to Caryll he explains that, he is very busy in doing justice to a far greater poet than himself (Shakespeare). "Besides this, I have the care of overlooking the Duke of Buckingham's papers, and correcting the press. That will be a very beautiful book, and has many things in it you will be particularly glad to see in relation to some former reigns."

In June Atterbury accepted an invitation to spend a few days at Twickenham, where Pope promised him good air, solitary groves, and diet sufficiently sparing to make him imagine himself one of the fathers of the desert. The bishop was not to bring his coach, since, if he desired to pay any visits, his host possessed a roomy chariot, besides the little chaise in which he had been jokingly compared to "Homer in a nutshell." While at Twickenham Atterbury suggested that Pope should do for Milton what he had already done for Isaiah, Chaucer, and Homer, that is, correct and modernise him. The bishop desired that "Samson Agonistes" should be reviewed and polished, since the piece was capable,

in his opinion, of being "improved" into a perfect model and standard of tragic poetry!

Although Atterbury had formerly rebuked his friend for a tendency to ridicule his more serious contemporaries, he was an enthusiastic admirer of "The Character of Atticus," which, since the death of Addison in 1719, had been freely handed round in manuscript. On February 26 the bishop writes to beg a complete copy of the famous lines, which had been solicited by "another lord." No small piece of Pope's writing, he says, had ever been so much sought after, and it had pleased every man, without exception, to whom it had been shown. "Since you now know where your real talent lies," continues Atterbury, forgetful of his former protest, "I hope you will not suffer that talent to be unemployed. For my part, I should be so glad to see you finish something of that kind that I could be content to be a little sneered at in a line or so, for the pleasure I should have in reading the rest."

The "handing round" process had the usual result. A year later the fragment found its way into a miscellaneous volume entitled, "Cythereia; or, Poem of Love, Gallantry, and Intrigue." It was published side by side with an "Answer," in which Addison's character is defended. The "Answer" was dedicated to his widow, Lady Warwick. Poor as it is, a few lines may be quoted here:

> When soft expressions covert malice hide,
> And pitying Satire cloaks o'erweening pride;
> When ironies reversed right virtue show,
> And point the way true merit we may know;

When Self-conceit just hints indignant Rage
Showing its wary caution to engage,—
In mazy wonder we astonished stand,
Perceive the stroke but miss th' emittent hand.

. . . . .

O Pope, forbear henceforth to vex the Muse
Whilst forced, a task so hateful she pursues;
No more let empty words to rhymes be brought,
And fluent sounds atone for want of thought.
Still Addison shall live, and pregnant Fame
Teem with eternal triumphs of his name;
Still shall his country hold him more endeared,
Loved by this age and by the next revered.
Or if, from good advice you turn your ear,
Nor friendly words, imparted, timely hear,
Exert your utmost energy of spite,
And as each envious hint arises, write:
So shall his deathless glory never cease,
And you, by *lessening*, will his fame *increase*.

Pope started on his rambles earlier than usual this year, for in June we find him staying with the Digbys at Sherborne, whence he sent a long account of the place to Martha Blount. Probably he went to Cirencester during the summer, but, contrary to his usual custom, he was at Twickenham in September. In August Atterbury had been committed to the Tower on the charge of complicity in the Jacobite plots which had recently come to light. Pope refused to believe in his guilt, which, however, was fully proved. Treasonable correspondence was found among the bishop's papers, and there was evidence that a conspiracy was being hatched to land a large force of foreign troops under the command of the Duke of Ormonde. On September 11 Pope wrote to Gay, who had gone to Bath to be cured of a colic:

"Pray tell Dr. Arbuthnot that even pigeon-pies and hogs'-puddings are thought dangerous by our governors, for those that have been sent to the Bishop of Rochester are opened and profanely pried into at the Tower. It is the first time dead pigeons have been suspected of carrying intelligence. To be serious, you and Mr. Congreve and the doctor, if he has not dined, will be sensible of my concern and surprise at the commitment of that gentleman, whose welfare is as much my concern as any friend I have. I think myself a most unfortunate wretch. I no sooner love, and, upon knowledge, fix my esteem to any man, but he either dies, like Mr. Craggs, or is sent to prison, like the bishop. God send him as well as I wish him, manifest him to be as innocent as I believe him, and make all his enemies know him as well as I do, that they may love him and think of him as well!"

About this time Pope made the acquaintance of a clever and pretty girl, Judith Cowper, with whom he carried on a kind of intellectual flirtation until her marriage. Judith was the daughter of Spencer Cowper, brother of the Lord Chancellor, and Pope had probably met her at Bennington, the Hertfordshire home of his friend, Mrs. Cæsar.[1] Although

[1] Daughter of Ralph Freeman of Aspeden Hall, Herts, and wife of Charles Cæsar, M.P. He had been Treasurer of the Navy in Queen Anne's reign. Mrs. Cæsar was a woman o literary enthusiasms. She was the friend and correspondent of Swift, Jervas, and Lord Orrery, as well as of Pope. She entertained the dean's literary *protégée*, Mrs. Barber, when that lady paid a visit to London. Mrs. Cæsar's granddaughter married Sir Charles Cottrell Dormer of Rousham, where the Cæsar correspondence, and some of the Cæsar portraits, are preserved.

only just twenty-one, Judith had already published one or two poems, "The Progress of Poetry" and verses on the death of Mr. Hughes. The former contains a flattering allusion to Pope, beginning :

> High on the radiant light see Pope appears
> With all the fire of youth and strength of years;
> Where'er supreme he points the nervous line
> Nature and art in bright conjunction shine.

A correspondence, half-gallant, half-literary, was carried on between the pair during the winter of 1722-3. Pope addressed Miss Cowper in the hyperbolical style that he kept for his women correspondents, and, being an economical person, he made certain words and phrases do double duty. Judith had sent him some verses to correct, and he replied that, having considered them seriously, he found he could mend them very little, and that only in trifles. He was anxious she should realise that he was much better, or at least less faulty, as a man and a friend than as a wit and a poet. Judith, like Lady Mary Wortley, had been sitting for her portrait, and Pope, who was now a little disappointed in his fine-lady friend, and more than a little alarmed at her wit, sent Miss Cowper some lines in which the two women are compared :

> Though sprightly Sappho force our love and praise,
> A softer wonder my pleased soul surveys—
> The mild Erinna, blushing in her bays.
> So, while the sun's broad beam yet strikes the sight,
> All mild appears the moon's more sober light;
> Serene, in virgin majesty she shines,
> And unobserved the glaring sun declines.

In another letter to Judith (November 5) the poet enclosed the famous lines about his garden, which Lady Mary Wortley believed to be inspired by her own charms:[1]

> What are the falling rills, the pendant shades,
> The morning bowers, the evening colonnades,
> But soft recesses for th' uneasy mind
> To sigh unheard in to the passing wind?
> So the struck deer, in some sequestered part,
> Lies down to die (the arrow in his heart);
> There hid in shades, and wasting day by day,
> Inly he bleeds, and pants his soul away.

"If these lines want poetry," comments Pope, "they do not want sense. God Almighty long preserve you from a feeling of them!"

Judith had made some inquiry about the progress of the Shakespeare edition, and he explains that the book is already a quarter printed, and, though the number of emendations is very great, he has never followed his own conjectures, but has kept to such amendments as were authorised by the old editions. "I only desire you to observe," he concludes, "by what natural, gentle degrees I have sunk to the

[1] In the spring of this year Lady Mary had sent the above verses (slightly varied) with the six extra lines, afterwards suppressed, to her sister, Lady Mar, at Paris. She says that the verses were addressed to Mr. Gay, who had congratulated Pope on having finished his house. She has stifled the verses in London, and begs they may die the same death at Paris. The suppressed lines run:

> Ah, friend, 'tis true—this truth you lovers know—
> In vain my structures rise, my gardens grow;
> In vain fair Thames reflects the double scenes
> Of hanging mountains and of sloping greens:
> Joy lives not here; to happier seats it flies,
> And only lives where W—— casts her eyes.

humble thing I now am: first from a pretending poet to a critic; then, to a low translator; lastly, to a mere publisher."

The flirtation presently entered upon a more ardent phase. Miss Cowper had resolved to write no more poetry. But for this assurance Pope declared that it would be too dangerous to correspond with a lady whose very first sight and writing had had too agitating an effect upon a man like himself. He was accustomed to fine sights and fine writings, and had been dull enough to sleep quietly after all he had seen and read till Miss Cowper broke in upon his stupidity and totally destroyed his indifference. In a paltry hermitage at Twickenham there lived a creature altogether unworthy of her memory, because he wished that he had never seen her or her poetry. "You have spoiled him for a *solitaire* [1] and a book all the days of his life, and put him into such a condition that he thinks of nothing, and inquires of nothing but a person who has nothing to say to him, and has left him for ever without hope of ever again regarding or pleasing or entertaining him, much less of seeing him. He has been so mad with the idea of her as to steal her picture, and passes whole days in sitting before it, talking to himself and (as some people imagine) making verses; but it is no such matter, for as long as he can get any of hers he can never turn his head to his own—it is so much better entertained."

[1] In a letter to Lady Mary dated August 18, 1716, Pope had said that her conversation spoiled him for a *solitaire*.

CHAPTER XXVII

1723

The Duke of Buckingham's "Works"—The Trial and Banishment of Atterbury—Depression of Spirits—Correspondence with Judith Cowper

THE issuing of the proposals for the subscription to the "Odyssey" was postponed in consequence of the outcry against Pope's edition of the Duke of Buckingham's "Works." After a royal licence had been obtained to protect the copyright, it was discovered that the book contained passages favourable to the Pretender. The edition was seized, and the treasonable parts cut out. Pope was censured for having admitted the objectionable passages, but his defence was that he had never looked into the papers! This was very likely true, but it does not say much for his view of the responsibilities of an editor. In any case, he thought it prudent to "lie low" till the storm had blown over.[1]

[1] There is a curious passage about the Duchess of Buckingham and Pope in a letter from Dr. William Stratford, of Christ Church, Oxon, to Edward, Lord Harley. The letter, which is preserved among the Portland MSS., is dated June 2, 1722, and the passage runs:

"Roffe is making pretences to the good Duchess of Buckingham. . . . I do not doubt but he is capable of such a thing,

On February 16 Pope wrote to Lord Carteret to vindicate his innocence, and observed in the course of his defence: "I take myself to be the only scribbler of my time of any degree of distinction who never received any places from the establishment, any pension from a Court, or any presents from a ministry." He wrote to Lord Harcourt in much the same strain, and actually suggested that it might be as well for him to resign the translation of the "Odyssey" to Tickell! "I fancy, in general," he remarks, "my appearing cool in this matter, and taking upon me a kind of dignity while I am abused and slandered, will have no ill effect in promoting it."

The failing health of his mother, the drudgery of his work on the "Odyssey," and the imprisonment of his friend Atterbury, sufficiently account for the depression that appears in Pope's letters at this time. The Bishop of Rochester was preparing his defence for the trial, which was to be held in May. On April 10 he wrote from the Tower to thank Pope for all his friendship, past and present.

and I believe he has caressed Pope so much of late with a view of making use of him on this occasion, but I know not what to say as to the success. If I consider the lady and her character, I should think it impossible! Yet she dined with him last Monday at Bromley. The young duke, the last duke's natural daughter, Pope, and Chamberlain came along with her. This, in one of her quality, and who knows so well how to keep her state, was an odd condescension to one who had not then been a widower a full month, if she designs no further favour."

By Roffe, Dr. Stratford means the Bishop of Rochester (Roffen) who was a new-made widower. The duchess was a natural daughter of James II., and she was plotting with the bishop in the interests of the Pretender, whom she afterwards persuaded to invest Atterbury with the principal management of his affairs.

"Give my faithful service to Dr. Arbuthnot," he continues, "and thanks for what he sent me, which was much to the purpose, if anything can be said to be to the purpose in a case that is already determined. Let him know my defence will be such that neither my friends need blush for me, nor will my enemies have great occasion of triumph, though sure of the victory. I shall want his advice before I go abroad in many things. But I question whether I shall be permitted to see him, or anybody but such as are absolutely necessary towards the despatch of my private affairs. If so, God bless you both! and may no part of the ill fortune that attends me ever pursue either of you! I know not but that I may call upon you at my hearing to say somewhat about my way of spending my time at the Deanery, which did not seem calculated towards managing plots and conspiracies."

Pope replied in a lengthy and grandiloquent letter. For a long time past, he declares, he has thought and felt for nothing but his friend. The greatest comfort he has is an intention to have attended the bishop in his exile, a project to which he has brought his mother to consent. Pope had the passion of the stay-at-home for imaginary journeys. He was always planning to visit Swift in Ireland, or Bolingbroke in France, or Lady Mary Wortley in Italy, or Lord Peterborough in whatever quarter of the globe that erratic nobleman happened to be. Mrs. Pope, though in many ways a tie, was really a convenience when her son was pressed to carry out his adventurous projects. It

was always his mother's health that kept him at home, a more picturesque hindrance than the fact that he was a bad sailor.

After urging Atterbury to think of Tully, Bacon, and Clarendon, the disgraced part of whose lives was the most enviable, Pope concludes: "I never shall suffer to be forgotten (nay, to be but faintly remembered) the honour, the pleasure, the pride I must ever have in reflecting how frequently you have delighted me, how kindly you have distinguished me, how cordially you have advised me! In conversation and study I shall always want you and wish for you; in my most lively and in my most thoughtful hours I shall equally bear about me the impressions of you; and perhaps it will not be in this life only that I shall have cause to remember and acknowledge the friendship of the Bishop of Rochester."

The bishop's trial began on May 8, in the House of Lords. Pope was called to give evidence as to the manner in which the bishop spent his time while at the Deanery, but it does not appear that the poet distinguished himself as a witness. "I never could speak in public," he told Spence, "and I don't believe that, if it was a set thing, I could give an account of any story to twelve friends together, though I could tell it to any three of them with a great deal of pleasure. When I was to appear for the Bishop of Rochester, in his trial, though I had but ten words to say, and that on a plain point (how that bishop spent his time when I was with him at Bromley) I made two or three blunders in it: and that, notwithstanding the first

row of lords (which was all I could see) were mostly of my acquaintance."

Though the bishop made an impressive and impassioned speech in his own defence, the Bill of Pains and Penalties was passed by a majority of forty, and Atterbury went into exile. It is characteristic of Pope that, in his view, the most important part of this historical trial was the fame that he himself would gain through having appeared as a witness. He wrote to congratulate Atterbury on his noble defence, and to prophesy with what lustre the bishop's innocence would shine out to other ages:

"I know perfectly well," he adds, "what a share of credit it will be to have appeared on your side, or to have been called your friend. I am far prouder of that word you publicly spoke of me than of anything I have yet heard of myself in my whole life. Thanks be to God that I, a private man, concerned in no judicature, and employed in no public cause, have had the honour, in this great and shining incident (which will make the first figure in the history of this time), to enter as it were my protest to your innocency, and my declaration of your friendship."

We hear no more of the proposed attendance on the bishop to France, but Pope declared that, if permission could be gained to correspond with the exile, he would leave off all other writing and apply his pen wholly to the amusement and comfort of his friend.

It is evident, from a letter to Lord Harcourt, that Pope had been much alarmed, when cited as

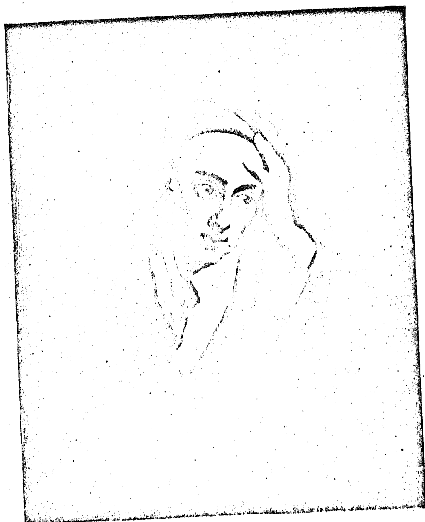
a witness in the Atterbury trial, lest he should be questioned about his religion, and also that he had decided to give an evasive reply.

"I resolve," he explained, "to take any opportunity of declaring (even upon oath) how different I am from a reputed Papist is. I could almost wish I were asked if I am not a Papist. Would it be proper in such a case to reply, that I don't perfectly know the import of the word, and would not answer anything that might, for ought I know, be prejudicial to me during the Bill against such, which is impending. But that *if to be a Papist be to profess and hold many such tenets of faith as are ascribed to Papists, I am not a Papist; and if to be a Papist be to hold any that are averse to, or destructive of, the present Government, King, or Constitution, I am no Papist.*"

A Bill was then in preparation for raising £100,000 by a tax on the Catholics over and above the double land-tax to which they were already subject. In a letter to Caryll Pope said that he saw nothing but melancholy prospects for his friends and himself. If this Bill passed he should lose a good part of his income, and was therefore providing an annuity "to enable me to keep myself that man of honour which I trust in God ever to be."

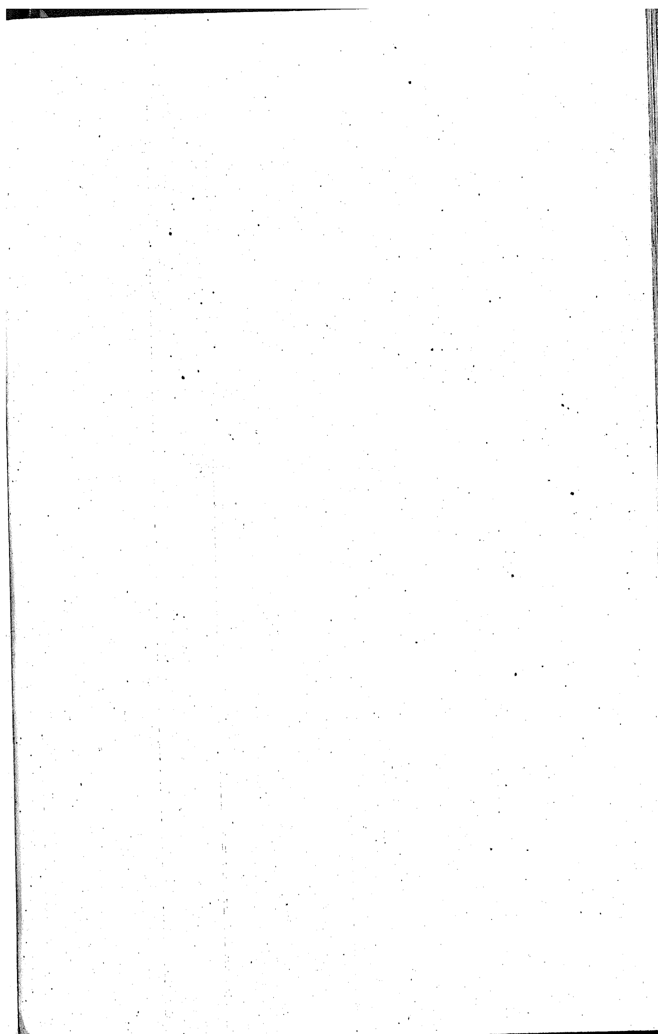
The renewal of Pope's correspondence with Swift in the August of this year shows the poet still in a melancholy mood.[1] His chief solace, he declares,

[1] In a letter to Broome, written about the same time, Pope says: "My body is sick, my soul is troubled, my pockets are empty, my trees are withered, my grass is burned."



From a mezzotint engraving by G. White, 1732, after a painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller.

ALEXANDER POPE, 1722.



is the society of Lord Bolingbroke, who had just returned from exile.[1]

"It is, sure, my most particular ill fate," he adds, "that all those I have most loved, and with whom I have most lived, must be banished. After both of you left England, my constant host was the Bishop of Rochester. Sure this is a nation that is cursedly afraid of being overrun with too much politeness, and cannot regain one great genius but at the expense of another. I tremble for Lord Peterborough, whom I now lodge with; he has too much wit, as well as courage, to make a solid general, and if he escapes being banished by others, I fear he will banish himself."

The merry vein in which the dean first knew him is now sunk into a turn of reflection, and he has acquired a quietness of mind which by fits improves into cheerfulness. He has no aversions except to knaves, and those who consort with them. The top pleasure of his life is one he learnt from Swift, namely, how to use the freedoms of friendship with men much his superiors.

"I have carefully avoided all intercourse with poets and scribblers, unless when by great chance I find a modest one. By these means I have had no quarrel with any personally, and none have been

[1] Bolingbroke had been dismissed by the Pretender and pardoned by George I., the death-sentence being cancelled. But he was still debarred from his title and estate. He had come over to try and get these disabilities removed, and had bribed the Duchess of Kendal with £11,000. In April, 1725, Walpole was compelled, through the duchess's influence, to bring in a Bill to restore Bolingbroke's estate, but his restoration to the House of Lords was successfully resisted.

enemies but who were also strangers to me: and as there is no great need of *éclaircissement* with such, whatever they writ or said I never retaliated, not only never seeming to know, but often really never knowing, anything of the matter."

This philosophical turn of mind was probably borrowed from Bolingbroke, who enclosed a letter to the dean in which he declares that no glut of study will ever cast him back into the hurry of the world, and he only regrets that he should have fallen so late into a studious course of life. Reflection and habit have rendered the world indifferent to him, while his enemies, in driving him out of party, have driven him out of cursed company; and, in stripping him of titles, rank, estate, and such trinkets, have given him that which no man could be happy without.

Swift was much too clear-sighted to be taken in by the professions of a man who was moving heaven and earth to recover the trinkets of titles, estates, and power. In his reply to the joint letter he says: "I have no very strong faith in you pretenders to retirement. You are not of an age for it, nor have gone through either good or bad fortune enough to go into a corner and form conclusions *de contemptu mundi et fugâ sæculi*; unless a poet grows weary of too much applause, as ministers do of too much weight of business."

The flirtation by correspondence with Judith Cowper continued throughout the greater part of this year, though by August Pope had reached the somewhat ominous stage of apologising for delay in answering the lady's letters. But at this

time he is resolved, he says, to retire from the world and devote himself to the only business he is good for. The lives of the great are divided between idleness and vanity, and in each of them poetical fiddlers make but part of their pleasure or their equipage.

"They have put me of late upon a task before I was aware, which I am *sick* and *sore* of; and yet engaged in honour to some persons whom I must neither disobey nor disappoint (I mean two or three in the world only) to go on with it. . . . You will easily find I am talking of my translating the 'Odyssey' by subscription; which looks, it must needs look, to all the world as a design of mine both upon fame and money, when in truth I believe I shall get neither; for the one I go about without any stomach, and the other I shall not go about at all."

In September of this year Miss Cowper wrote some verses on the Bower at Bennington which were much admired by her friends. Mrs. Cæsar begged for a copy to send to Pope, and Miss Cowper replied in the style of the polite letter-writer:[1]

[1] This letter is from the unpublished MS. in the Cæsar Correspondence. It is dated from Hertingfordbury, and contained a copy of the lines on the Bower, which run as follows:

> In Tempe's shades the living lyre was strung,
> And the first Pope (immortal Phœbus) sung.
> These happy shades, where equal beauty reigns,
> Bold rising hills, slant vales, and far-stretched plains,
> The grateful verdure of the waving woods,
> The soothing murmur of the falling floods,
> A nobler boast, a higher glory yield,
> Than that which Phœbus stamped on Tempe's field:
> All that can charm the eye or please the ear
> Says, Harmony itself inhabits here.

"I should think myself very happy if my obedience to your commands could give you but part of the pleasure the receiving of them made me feel. Where I esteem and value I must be sincere, and as a proof I have sense enough to do both in relation to you, I will freely own self-interest has a great share in the regard I must always profess for Mrs. Cæsar: when I do, therefore, anything you are pleased to say will oblige you, you are still under no obligation to me; 'tis only in the most sensible manner pleasing and obliging myself, and giving at the same time the greatest, as well as the only, proof in my power to give, that I have judgment."

There is a good deal more in the same strain, but it will be sufficient to quote the all-important postscript:

"If Mr. Madan is still at Bennington, pray let him know we have just received information that the Lumber House, by a sudden and lamentable fire, is burnt down to the ground. Though great care was used, it seems they have only been able to save a violin, a powder-horn, and Captain Strudwick."

Mrs. Cæsar at once forwarded the verses to Pope, who replied on September 12:

"For God's sake, madam, do not worry my soul out of this miserable body with making it too proud to stay in it. The verses you sent me will certainly send me to Phœbus and the gods: and then, for ever adieu to ye!

"Tell Mrs. Cowper she does very ill by me to

send me so many tokens of heavenly favour and never afford me one beatifical vision. Her friends here are well. So, madam, are yours—I mean my mother and myself, whom you honour too much by mentioning.

"I obey you twelve times more,[1] and am always Mr. Cæsar's and, Madam,

"Yours, etc.,

"A. Pope."[2]

On September 26 Pope wrote to Judith about a certain poetical sketch he has seen on the Bower at Bennington, and urges her to write something in the descriptive way, mixed with vision and moral, like the pieces of the old Provençal poets, which abound with fancy, and are the most amusing scenes in nature.

"I have long had an inclination to tell a fairy-tale," he continues; "the more wild and exotic the better. Therefore, a *vision*, which is confined to no rules of probability, will take in all the variety and luxuriancy of description you will, provided there be an apparent moral to it. I think one or two of the 'Persian Tales' would give one hints for such an invention. . . . If you did but at leisure form descriptions from objects in nature itself which struck you as most lively, I would undertake to find a tale that should bring them all together, which you will think an odd undertaking, but, in a piece of this fanciful and imaginary nature, I am sure is practicable."

[1] Mrs. Cæsar had probably asked for twelve more forms for subscriptions to the "Odyssey."

[2] From the unpublished MS. in the Cæsar Correspondence.

Anything more unpromising than a moral descriptive fairy-tale can hardly be conceived, but that Pope had really entertained the idea is proved by his telling Spence, many years later, that "after reading the 'Persian Tales' (and I had been reading Dryden's 'Fables' just before them) I had some thought of writing a Persian Fable in which I would have given full loose to description and imagination. It would have been a very wild thing if I had executed it, but it might not have been unentertaining."

Judith Cowper did not seize upon the opportunity of collaborating with the first poet of the age, for her thoughts were turned towards a romance of real life. On December 7 of this year she was married to the Mr. Madan of her postscript, who was a neighbour at Hertingfordbury,[1] and, though she published some verses after her marriage, her flirtation with the poet came to an untimely end.

[1] Martin Madan, M.P. for Wootton Basset, and Groom of the Bedchamber to Frederick, Prince of Wales. Their son was the Rev. Martin Madan, who won a rather unenviable notoriety by publishing a book in defence of polygamy, called "Thelyphthora" (1780). His cousin, Cowper the poet, replied to it with "Anti-Thelyphthora: a Tale in Verse."

CHAPTER XXVIII

1724

The Subscription for the "Odyssey"—Correspondence with Lord Bolingbroke

THE publishing arrangements for the translation of the "Odyssey" were not made so easily as those for the Iliad. Tonson refused to contract for the copy, but an agreement was come to with Lintot, who paid £600 and supplied the subscribers' copies free. The work was to be brought out in five volumes at a guinea a volume. Lintot made little or nothing by his venture, but it is estimated that Pope, after paying Broome £500 [1] for translating eight books, and Fenton £200 for four books, cleared about £3,700.[2]

As before, the poet's friends rallied round him, and not only subscribed themselves, but worked hard to secure subscribers. When the "Proposals" were to be printed, Pope wrote to Lord Harley to ask how many sets were to be set down under his name in the printed list of subscribers. Mr. Walpole and Lord Townshend had each taken ten sets, but

[1] Broome was also allowed the subscriptions that he got from his own friends. These amounted to £70.

[2] Carruthers estimates Pope's profits at not more than £2,885.

Pope explained that he had put down the Duchess of Buckingham for five, and suggested that he should put down the same number for his lordship. Harley replied that he would take ten sets, his wife five, and his daughter Peggy[1] one. At five guineas the set this family subscription would therefore amount to eighty guineas, and entail finding house-room for eighty quarto volumes.

Mrs. Cæsar was almost as eager a subscription-hunter as John Caryll himself. In the Cæsar Correspondence there are several little notes about the great business. Thus, on April 23 Pope writes: "I obey you in sending five more of my receipts; few people obey so readily as those who are rewarded for their obedience, which I find I am by you much above my merits." And again, on July 22: "It is no new thing for a poet to be obliged to Mrs. Cæsar. I therefore do as you order me. I beg you to accept a vile print which I promised you at Lord Harley's. I will soon have the honour of sending you a better."

In the Cæsar copy of the "Odyssey" at Rousham is pasted a little note to the lady, in which Pope says: "You will see by the enclosed I have obeyed you in some articles, as to Lord Stratford, Lady Sarah, etc. I took another liberty with your own name, which you knew nothing of, nor I dare say would have expected; and have made a star of Mrs. Cæsar as well as of Mrs. Fermor.[2] If anybody asks

[1] Lady Margaret, afterwards the "good" Duchess of Portland.
[2] An allusion to the end of "The Rape of the Lock." Belinda's curl became a constellation.

you the reason of this, quote to 'em this verse of Virgil:

> "Processit Cæsaris Astrum.
>
> "*Ecl.* 5.

I am daily in hopes of waiting on you when you are in town. . . ." Mrs. Cæsar's name is starred in the printed list of subscribers, and is also printed in capitals—the only one thus honoured.

Pope was particularly anxious that Broome should preserve a rigid silence about the number of books that each partner had translated, since the least breath of the truth would prejudice the town and spoil the subscription. "I do not doubt," he remarked in one letter, "but I shall have some merit in advancing your fame to its just pitch. The public is both an unfair and a silly judge, unless it be led or trepanned into justice."

Broome, however, would "still be talking," for he was immensely proud of his connection with the leading poet of his time. Pope stated in his "Proposals" that, though he was the undertaker of the translation, he had engaged assistants to aid him in the work; but he carefully refrained from stating the amount of help that he had received. Although, as will be seen, he afterwards claimed to have translated seven books that were actually the work of Broome and Fenton, he plumed himself upon his honourable and generous conduct. He also contrived to prove, to his own satisfaction, that by concealing Broome's share in the work he was actually advancing his friend's reputation. In the course of a discussion on this point, he wrote to the simple-

minded Rector of Stuston in a perfect ecstasy of self-approval :

"To open my mind to you freely as a Christian, and talk as to a divine, I protest, in the sight of Him to whom I owe any talents I have, I am as far above the folly of being vain of those I have as I should be above the baseness of arrogating to myself those I have not." One good-natured action or one charitable intention was, in his opinion, of more merit than all the rhyming, jingling faculties in the world. Indeed, he thought it more desirable to gratify a private friend in his desire of a character this way than to advance his own, which he could never be proud of, when he considers how vast a share of popular admiration proceeds from ignorance.

Bolingbroke had returned to France at the end of 1723, but he kept up a friendly correspondence with Twickenham. He, like Lord Oxford, regretted that the poet should devote his time and talents to the more or less mechanical task of translating. On February 18 he wrote a long and interesting letter to Pope, in the course of which he urged his friend to "compose," and not to look upon his translations of Homer as the chief work of his life. "Prelude with translations, if you please," he exclaims, "but after translating what was writ three thousand years ago, it is incumbent upon you that you write, because you are able to write, what will deserve to be translated three thousand years hence into languages as yet perhaps unformed."

It was Pope's duty, according to Bolingbroke, to help to spread and fix his own language. The French and Italians had more lessons of luxury to

give than the English, but we were then their masters in learning. The philosophers of the Continent were obliged to learn English, and the mathematicians might have been under the same necessity if Sir Isaac Newton had not saved them the trouble by writing in Latin. But a language which was designed to spread, must recommend itself by poetry, by eloquence, by history.

"I believe," continues Bolingbroke, "England has produced as much genius as any country. Why, then, is our poetry so little in request among strangers? Several reasons may be given, and this certainly as the most considerable, that we have not one original great work of that kind wrote near enough to perfection to pique the curiosity of other nations, as the epic poetry of the Italians, and the dramatic poetry of the French pique ours. Eloquence and history are, God knows, at the lowest ebb imaginable among us. The different styles are not fixed, the bar and the pulpit have no standard, and our histories are gazettes, ill-digested and worse writ. . . . In short, excellent writings can alone recommend a language, and contribute to the spreading of it. No man will learn English to read Homer or Virgil. Whilst you translate, therefore, you neglect to propagate the English tongue; and whilst you do so, you neglect to extend your own reputation."

The letter concludes with allusions to Swift and Voltaire which are not without interest. Swift, at this time, suffered from morbid fears of daggers, halters, and gibbets, which, he believed, were prepared for him by the party in power. Arbuthnot

compared him to Sancho Panza, who clung to a broom-bush all night, thinking that a precipice yawned beneath him, and found, when daylight broke, that he was within two inches of the ground. Bolingbroke remarks that Swift had not enough dissipation to divert his spleen, and adds : "Those black, corrosive vapours which he exhaled so profusely formerly in the open air have been long pent up in a cloister, and he is become the martyr of that humour which was given him for the punishment of others."

Bolingbroke had just been reading *The Death of Mariamne* by his friend Voltaire. He found in it the art and delicacy of Racine, with a spirit of poetry which was never possessed in the same degree by either Racine or Corneille. Voltaire had expressed his intention of introducing himself to Pope when he visited England, and hoped that the Muses would answer for him.[1] In his reply Pope says that he has just been reading "La Ligue" (the title under which the "Henriade" was first published in 1723) and criticises it very favourably, remarking that the author is not less a poet for being a man of sense, as Seneca and his nephew were. "Do not smile," he continues, "when I add that I esteem him for that honest principled spirit of religion which shines through the whole, and from whence, unknown as I am to M. Voltaire, I conclude him at once a freethinker and a lover of quiet; no bigot, but yet no heretic; one who honours authority and national sanctions without

[1] Voltaire made Pope's acquaintance during his stay in England from 1726 to 1729.

prejudice to truth or charity; one who has studied controversy less than reason, and the Fathers less than mankind; in a word, one worthy, from his rational temper, of that share of friendship and intimacy with which you honour him."

With regard to his own work, Pope explains that he does not translate Homer as a great task, but as an easy one. He has begun to think more of comfort and happiness than of fame, and "To write well, lastingly well, immortally well, must not one be prepared to endure the reproaches of men, want, and much fasting—nay, martyrdom in its cause? It is such a task as scarce leaves a man time to be a good neighbour, a useful friend—nay, to plant a tree, much less to save his soul." As for the present state of literature in England, Pope points out that a State divided into various factions and interests occasions an eternal swarm of bad writers. "Some of these will be encouraged by the Government equally, if not superiorly, to the good ones, because the latter will rarely, if ever, dip their pens for such ends. And these are sure to be cried up and followed by one half of the kingdom, and consequently possessed of no small degree of reputation. Our English style is more corrupted by the party writers than by any other cause whatever. They are universally read, and will be read and approved, in proportion to their degree of merit, much more than any other set of authors in any science, as men's passions and interests are stronger and surer than their tastes and judgments."

Lord Oxford died on May 21, and was succeeded

by his son Edward. On June 1 Pope wrote to Mrs. Cæsar, who was an intimate friend of Lord and Lady Oxford:

"I know you to be sincere in your concern for the loss of this great man, and therefore you will believe me so. The degree of friendship with which he honoured me, though I will not call it a great one, is one I shall never forget. I believe we shall always concur in our concerns and satisfactions, as well as in our esteem or disesteem of men and manners. The world is not worth living in if all that are good in it leave it for a better. . . . Pray tell Mrs. Madan that I sit down by the river and weep till she returns; and when they bid me sing, I reply, How can I sing when she is in a strange land?"[1]

Pope was laid up during this spring with an intermittent fever, and in June he went to Dorsetshire for a change. On June 15 he wrote a birthday letter to Martha Blount, in which he expressed his regret at having to leave home just as he had fancied they were to begin to live together in the country.[2] In this letter we find the first intimation of Pope's impatience at the restrictions imposed on his intercourse with Martha by the fact that she was living with her family. "Wherever I wander," he remarks, "one reflection strikes me: I wish you were as free as I; or at least had a tie as tender and as reasonable as mine to a relation that as well deserved your constant thought, and to

[1] From the unpublished MS. in the Cæsar Correspondence.

[2] The Blounts had taken a house for the summer months at Petersham.

whom you would always be pulled back (in such a manner as I am) by the heart-strings." He adds that he has never been well since he set out, but she is not to let his mother know it. On the other hand, since Mrs. Pope probably does not send a true account of her own health to him, he commissions Patty to report progress."

By July the poet was back at Twickenham, much recovered in health, and very busy laying out a new garden. In September he was preparing to start on his usual round of visits, and had accepted invitations to stay with the Duchess of Buckingham at Leighs, and the new Lord Oxford at Wimpole. Mrs. Pope, however, was taken dangerously ill towards the end of the month, and her son was obliged to give up his visits. For the next eight or nine weeks he devoted himself to nursing his mother, and by the end of the year had the satisfaction of seeing her restored to her usual degree of health.

CHAPTER XXIX

1725

The Edition of Shakespeare

IN March of this year the first three volumes of the "Odyssey" were published; in April the edition of Shakespeare made its appearance; while, in the course of the summer, the famous Grotto was finished. Of the three works, the Grotto was the only unqualified success. Subscribers to the "Odyssey" were of opinion that they received small value for their money. People complained that the paper was bad, the margin narrow, the type old, and the poetry journey-work. When it became known what a large share of the translation had been done by obscure assistants, the note of dissatisfaction grew louder and more shrill.

Pope's edition of Shakespeare has generally been passed over by his biographers as a "regrettable incident," but the work that he put into it, whether for good or evil, deserves more careful consideration. Nicholas Rowe had brought out an edition of Shakespeare in 1709, but it was recognised, even at that date, that his editorial task was performed in the most perfunctory fashion. The growing demand for Shakespeare's dramas, and the gradually

increasing comprehension of his genius, tempted Tonson to speculate in a new and costly edition of the plays. It was characteristic of a publisher that he should imagine one great poet to be the ideal editor of another and far greater poet. No expense was spared in the production. The edition was published in six sumptuous quarto volumes at a guinea each. Though Pope was paid only £217 12*s.* for his share in the work, it was commonly believed, by his enemies at least, that he received a part of the profits from the subscriptions.

From the Preface, which was long regarded as a model of its kind, we gather what had been Pope's aims when he undertook the task, and from the work itself we may discover how far he carried out those aims. He enjoyed superior opportunities to Rowe, since he had the folios of 1623 and 1632 at his disposal, as well as the quarto editions of the plays. Probably these were borrowed from the private libraries of some of his book-collecting friends. He professed to have carefully collated the texts of the various early editions, but it is clear, from internal evidence, that he had done nothing of the kind.

"I have discharged the dull duty of an editor," writes Pope in his Preface, "to my best judgment, with more labour than I expect thanks, with a religious abhorrence of all innovation, and without any indulgence to my private sense of conjecture. The various readings are fairly put in the margin, so that every one may compare them, and those I have preferred into the text are constantly *ex fide codicum* upon authority. The alterations or additions

which Shakespeare himself made are taken notice of as they occur. Some suspected passages which are excessively bad . . . are degraded to the bottom of the page, with an asterisk referring to the places of their insertion. The scenes are marked so distinctly that every removal of place is specified, which is more necessary in this author than any other, since he shifts them more frequently: and sometimes, without attending to this particular, the reader would have met with obscurities. The more obsolete or unusual words are explained. Some of the most shining passages are distinguished by commas in the margin; and where the beauties lay, not in particular but in the whole, a star is prefixed to the scene."

It has commonly been supposed that Pope bestowed little labour on this edition, but as a matter of fact he seems to have devoted a great deal of time and trouble to the editorial task, which he had undertaken in happy ignorance of his lack of qualifications for such work. He did not possess the necessary knowledge of Elizabethan literature, dramatic or otherwise, he was wanting in the industry of the critical scholar, and he had little or no conscience where verbal accuracy was concerned. Contrary to his professions in his Preface, he constantly indulged in private conjecture, often ill-founded, rarely put the various readings in the margin, made thousands of changes on his own authority, and he left many obsolete words unexplained, for the excellent reason that he had no idea of their meaning. The passages that did not commend themselves to his own individual taste

he printed at the bottom of the page, on the ground that they were probably the interpolations of the players—a class for which he had felt the strongest dislike ever since his collision with Colley Cibber. But the majority of his changes, more especially of the unacknowledged changes, were made in the measure. He desired that Shakespeare, like Homer, should talk good English, and that his lines should scan. The metre was, in his eyes, more important than the sense, and, if he had had the courage, he would probably have reduced all Shakespeare's verse to the same dead level of correct monotony.

However, some virtues must be conceded to him. He replaced certain passages that had been dropped out of earlier editions, and he made some happy emendations. For example, we owe him one shining beauty. In the lines—

> Oh ! it came o'er my ear like the sweet south
> That breathes upon a bank of violets.

Pope substituted "south" for "sound," which was the accepted reading in his day. Again, it must be owned that some of his attempts at mending the metre, where he does not interfere with the sense, might meet with approval from all but rabid upholders of the original text. Thus, in *Measure for Measure*, Isabella's lines were changed from—

> There have I made my promise, upon the
> Heavy middle of the night to call upon him,

to—

> There, on the heavy middle of the night,
> Have I my promise made to call upon him.

Though the public generally was dissatisfied with Pope's edition, if only on account of the numerous misprints which disfigured the costly volumes, a student who had "specialised" in Elizabethan literature was required to point out the faults of omission and commission that were to be found on nearly every page. Unfortunately for Pope, one such specialist was numbered among his contemporaries. Lewis Theobald was a contemporary in the literal sense of the word, for he was born in the same year as Pope, and died in the same year. He, too, was nominally a poet, had translated the classics, and contemplated a version of the "Odyssey." Unlike Pope, he wrote plays which appeared on the boards under his own name. Unlike Pope, again, he was well read in early English literature, and more especially in the Elizabethan drama. Though he has generally been regarded as a dull and plodding pedant, he had flashes of intuition, where the Shakespearean text was concerned, that positively amounted to genius.

Theobald was a conscientious, well-intentioned man, and he regarded Pope's edition of Shakespeare with more sorrow than anger. In the innocence of his heart, he really seems to have believed that the poet would welcome corrections and emendations, and, in any case, he could not let slip such an opportunity of giving the results of his studies to the world.

Accordingly he set about preparing a now famous pamphlet, which he published in 1726 under the title of "Shakespeare Restored; or, a Specimen of the many Errors, as well committed as unamended,

by Mr. Pope in his late Edition of this Poet. Designed not only to correct the said Edition, but to restore the True Reading of Shakespeare in all the Editions ever yet published."

Theobald reckoned himself among the most ardent admirers of Pope's poetry, and had even done battle with Dennis on that account. In his Preface to "Shakespeare Restored," he says that he had expected much from Pope's edition, and had been disappointed.

"I have so great an esteem for Mr. Pope," he adds, "and so high an opinion of his genius and excellencies, that I beg to be excused from the least intention of derogating from his merits in this attempt to restore the true reading of Shakespeare. Though I confess a veneration almost rising to idolatry for the writings of the inimitable poet, I would be very loth even to do *him* justice at the expense of that other gentleman's character. But I am persuaded, I shall stand as free from such a charge in the execution of this design as I am sure I am in the intention of it; for I am assuming a task here which this learned editor seems purposely (I was going to say, with too nice a scruple) to have resigned."

Though Theobald deals faithfully with Pope's blunders, the spirit of humanity and courtesy is preserved almost throughout. The greater number of corrections and emendations were given to *Hamlet*, but over a hundred relate to the other plays. Many were of the first importance, while others dealt with errors of punctuation. The different way in which the imagination of the two

editors worked may best be seen in their several readings of a passage in *Henry V.*, the meaning of which had hitherto baffled all conjectures. This was Mistress Quickly's famous description of the death of Falstaff, which, in the folio of 1623, is thus printed :

> 'A made a finer end, and went away and it had been any christome child ; 'a parted ev'n just between twelve and one, ev'n at the turning o' th' tyde ; for after I saw him fumble with the sheets, and play with flowers, and smile upon his fingers-end, I knew there was but one way ; for his nose was as sharpe as a pen, and a table of green fields.

Pope threw out the concluding half-dozen words, remarking : "This nonsense got into all the editions by a pleasant mistake of the stage editors, who printed from the common piecemeal-written parts in the playhouse. A table was here directed to be brought in (it being a scene in a tavern where they drink at parting), and this direction crept into the text from the margin. Greenfield was the name of the property man in that time who furnished implements, etc., for the actors."

This "wild surmise" was not accepted by Theobald. He knew more about the theatre than Pope, and he was aware that the stage directions for furnishing properties are never marked in the middle of the scenes for which they are required. Also, that the name of the property master is never given in the prompter's book. Further, no one but Pope had ever heard of Greenfield. Theobald possessed an edition of Shakespeare on the margin of which some one had written "talked" for "table." This gave a clue. Let table be read "babled"

(as babbled was often spelt) and then the passage would run: "His nose was as sharp as a pen and 'a babled of green fields." This beautiful conjecture, whether accurately founded or not, has been accepted by every subsequent English editor except Warburton, who omitted the disputed phrase, and Collier, who preferred "on a table of green frieze." Pope himself, in the second edition of his Shakespeare, alludes to the emendation, remarking that he had omitted the words because they could not be found in any edition till after the author's death. "However, 'The Restorer' has a mind they should be genuine, and, since he cannot otherwise make sense of 'em, would have a mere conjecture admitted."

In spite of the studied moderation of Theobald's tone, a moderation not less rare at that time than the thoroughness of his critical methods, and the wide range of his reading in English literature, Pope was furious with "the Restorer," and he prepared a punishment that was out of all proportion to the offence. Two years later Theobald was pilloried as the hero of that monumental satire, "The Dunciad."

CHAPTER XXX

1725

The Grotto—Swift's Misanthropy—Scandal about Martha Blount

THE somewhat disappointing reception accorded to the edition of Shakespeare and the early books of the "Odyssey" was partly compensated for by the *succès fou* of the Grotto, which was at once the admiration and envy of the poet's friends. In a letter to Edward Blount, dated June 2, Pope gives the following account of his subterranean work:

"Let the young ladies be assured I make nothing new in my gardens without wishing to see the print of their fairy steps in every part of them. I have put the last hand to my works of this kind in happily finishing the subterraneous way and Grotto. I there found a spring of the clearest water, which falls in a perpetual rill, that echoes through the cavern day and night. From the river Thames you see through my arch up to a walk of the wilderness, to a kind of open temple, wholly composed of shells in the rustic manner; and from that distance under the temple you look down through a sloping arcade of trees, and see the sails on the river passing suddenly and vanishing

as through a perspective glass. When you shut the doors of the Grotto it becomes on an instant, from a luminous room, a camera obscura, on the walls of which all the objects of the river, hills, woods and boats, are forming a moving picture in their visible radiations; and when you have a mind to light it up it affords you a very different scene. It is finished with shells, interspersed with pieces of looking-glass in angular forms; and in the ceiling is a star of the same materials, at which, when a lamp of an orbicular figure of thin alabaster is hung in the middle, a thousand pointed rays glitter and are reflected over the place. There are connected with this Grotto by a narrower passage two porches with niches and seats—one towards the river of smooth stones, full of light and open; the other towards an arch of trees, rough with shells, flint, and iron-ore. The bottom is paved with simple pebbles, as the adjoining walk up the wilderness to the temple is to be cockle-shells in the natural taste, agreeing not ill with the little dripping murmur, and the acquatic idea of the whole place. It wants nothing to complete it but a good statue with an inscription."[1]

[1] Johnson remarks that Pope, "being under the necessity of making a subterraneous passage to a garden on the other side of the road, adorned it with fossil bodies, and dignified it with the title of a Grotto; a place of silence and retreat, from which he endeavoured to persuade his friends and himself that cares and passions could be excluded. A grotto is not often the wish or pleasure of an Englishman, who has more frequent need to solicit than exclude the sun; but Pope's excavation was requisite as an entrance to his garden, and, as some men try to be proud of their defects, he extracted an ornament from an inconvenience, and vanity produced a grotto where necessity enforced a passage."

Pope was quite as proud of his gardening operations as he was of his poetry, though he affected to despise the materials with which he had to deal. "I am as busy in three inches of garden," he tells Lord Strafford, "as any man can be in three-score acres. I fancy myself like the fellow that spent his life in cutting the twelve Apostles on one cherry-stone. I have a theatre, an arcade, a bowling-green, a grove, and what not, in a bit of ground that would have been but a plate of sallet to Nebuchadnezzar the first day he was turned to grass."

The actual translation of the remaining books of the "Odyssey" was finished in July, but the work of revision and annotation dragged on into the following year. Pope declared that this "laborious book" had cost him as much pains as the "Iliad," though the drudgery had not all been his own, and he thought it would be found an exacter version. "When I translate again," he adds with feeling, "I will be hanged; nay, I will do something to deserve to be hanged, which is worse, rather than drudge for such a world as is no judge of your labour. I will sooner write something to anger it than to please it."[1]

Pope's two humble assistants were beginning to tremble for their share of reputation, if not of profit.

[1] Pope was accustomed to talk as if he wrote solely from benevolent motives, to "do good" to his fellow-men; as if any one could be morally the better or the worse for a new translation of the "Odyssey." His friends caught the infection of this cant, and talked about the ingratitude shown by the world towards their efforts for its welfare, when they were actually trying to make money, or further their political ambitions.

Broome was a timid, easy-going man, while Fenton was far too lazy to take any steps by himself.[1] He urged Broome to come to town, in order to go into the accounts with Pope. But the Rector of Stuston hung back. He wished to leave the business part of the undertaking to Fenton, and he suggested that the accounts should be allowed to stand over till the spring. But he freely confesses that he fears a breach rather than peace from that treaty.

"Be assured Mr. Pope will not let us divide—I fear not give us our due share—of honour. He is a Cæsar in poetry, and will bear no equal."

Mrs. Howard was in negotiation at this time for a piece of land at Richmond, where her royal master built her a house known as Marble Hill. It was supposed that she would be all-powerful in the next reign, and among her many courtiers were included Peterborough, Bathurst, Pope, Gay, Arbuthnot, and—later on—Swift. Some difficulty arising about the land surrounding Marble Hill, Mr. Walpole was spirited over to Twickenham by Lord Peterborough, and swore a round oath that the Prince's favourite should have whatever grounds she wanted. This visit was the occasion of a friendly interview between Walpole and the Twickenham poet, who was usually "agin the Government." Nothing extraordinary passed at the meeting, according to Pope's account, and the only extraordinary thing about the affair was that he did not return the minister's visit. Pope had

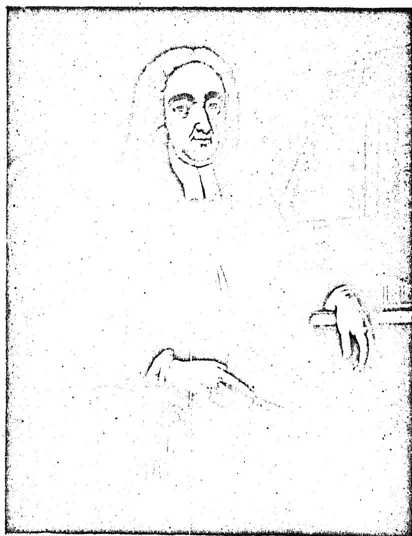
[1] Fenton was so indolent that he left off fishing because the fish bit. He could not bear the trouble of pulling up the rod and baiting the hook.

been told, probably by Peterborough, that Walpole was a good friend, and kept his promises. But "The truth is," to quote his own words, "I have nothing to ask of him, and I believe he knows that nobody follows him *for nothing*." [1]

Swift had been contemplating a visit to England for some time past, his fears of halters and gibbets being somewhat abated. He had been deterred from carrying out his project by a "cursed deafness" that seized him every two or three months, and also by the fact that most of his old friends were either banished, attainted, beggared or retired. Still, he intended to venture some day, and he ordered Pope to provide him with two or three harridan ladies who would nurse him when he was ill, or talk loud to him when he was deaf. He regrets to hear that his friend is again embarked to Homerland, and observes that "Lord Oxford used to curse the occasions that put you upon translations, and if he and the queen had lived you should entirely have followed your own genius, built and planted much, and writ only when you had a mind."

Swift was at this time engaged upon "Gulliver's Travels," of which Pope says that he has heard

[1] The poet did, however, mention to Sir Robert his desire to obtain an abbacy in France for his old friend and priest, Robert Southcote. It will be remembered that, twelve years before, when Pope was thought to be in a hopeless condition, Southcote had consulted Dr. Radcliffe, and returned with the prescription—"Study less, and ride out every day." Walpole, probably through his brother Horace, obtained for Southcote an abbacy at Avignon, and Pope never forgot the favour. He told Fortescue that he should wait till the minister was out of power before he said what he thought of him.



From a mezzotint engraving by Vanhaecken after the painting by Markham.

DR. JONATHAN SWIFT.



great accounts. As for his own travels, he promises that they shall never more be in a strange land, but he intends a diligent investigation of his own territories. In other words, he will translate no more, but produce something domestic, fit for his own country and his own time. If Swift will come to Twickenham, he promises to find him elderly ladies enough that can halloo, and two who can nurse, though they are too old and feeble to make much noise, namely, his own mother and nurse.

"I can also help you," he continues, "to a lady who is as deaf, though not so old as yourself[1]—you will be pleased with one another, I will engage; though you do not hear one another, you will converse, like spirits, by intuition. What you will most wonder at is, she is considerable at Court, yet no party woman, and lives in Court, yet would be easy, and make you easy."

Swift explained that his "Travels" were ready for the press when the world should deserve them, and declared that the chief end he proposed to himself in all his labours was to vex the world rather than to divert it. "If only I could compass that design without hurting my own person and fortune, I would be the most indefatigable writer you have ever seen, without reading." He is delighted to hear that Pope has done with translations, and begs that he will give the world one lash the more at his—the dean's—special request. "I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities," he concludes, "and all my love is towards

[1] Mrs. Howard.

individuals : for instance, I hate the tribe of lawyers, but I love Counsellor Such-a-one and Judge Such-a-one. So with physicians—I will not speak of my own trade—soldiers, English, Scotch, French, and the rest. But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, though I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth. . . ."

Among the men thus loved was Arbuthnot, who, Swift used to say, had every good quality and virtue that could make a man amiable or useful, "but alas! he has a sort of slouch in his walk." If the world had but a dozen men like Arbuthnot in it, the dean declared that he would burn his famous "Travels." Pope, who professed a kind of universal benevolence, must have been shocked at Swift's misanthropy, but he was too thoroughly dominated by the dean's virile influence to attempt any downright protest. In his reply he makes a jesting allusion to Swift's desire to be employed as an avenging angel of wrath, and to break his vial of indignation over the heads of the wretched creatures of this world.

"I really enter as fully as you can desire," he explains, "into your principle of love of individuals ; and I think the way to have a public spirit is first to have a private one ; for who can believe, said a friend of mine, that any man can care for a hundred thousand people who never cared for one ? No ill-humoured man can ever be a patriot, any more than a friend. . . ."

Of the triumvirate, Swift, Pope, and Bolingbroke, each thought himself the only true philosopher, the only sincere despiser and contemner of the

world, while each rebuked the others for self-deception and a pretence at Stoicism. Thus, Bolingbroke, who was in England again this winter, assures Swift that he and Pope are very indifferent philosophers. "If you despised the world so much as you pretend and perhaps believe," he points out, "you would not be so angry with it. The founder of your sect (Seneca), that noble original whom you think it so great an honour to resemble, was a slave to the worst part of the world, to the Court; and all his big words were the language of a slighted lover, who desired nothing so much as a reconciliation, and feared nothing so much as a rupture. I believe the world has used me as scurvily as most people, and yet I could never find in my heart to be thoroughly angry with the simple, false, capricious thing. I should blush alike to be discovered fond of the world, or piqued at it.[1]

In November Mrs. Pope was very ill with jaundice, and her son's time was spent in a "trembling attendance upon death." His old nurse, Mary Beach, died on November 5, and, though Mrs. Pope recovered, the poet complains that there is "no hour of day or night, but presents to me some image of death or suffering."

To Mary Beach Pope erected a tablet in Twickenham Church, and gave her perhaps a better memorial in a touching passage in a letter to Lord Oxford. "My poor old nurse," he writes, "who

[1] "Swift's scorn of mankind was the frenzy of disappointment, Pope's vaunted contempt was the affectation of superiority, and Bolingbroke's acted indifference was the struggle to hide his mortification at the sentence of political death which had been passed on him" [Elwin].

has lived in constant attendance and care of me since I was an infant at her breast, died the other day. I think it a fine verse, that of your friend Mr. Prior:

> "And by his side
> A good man's greatest loss, a faithful servant, died;

and I do not think one of my own an ill one, speaking of a nurse:

> "The tender second to a mother's cares.
> Homer's 'Odyssey,' 7.

Surely this sort of friend is not the least; and this sort of relation, when continued through life, superior to most that we call so."

The intimate friendship that existed between Pope and Martha Blount had given a handle to the poet's enemies, and, more especially since the Blounts had taken country lodgings in his neighbourhood, scandal had been sown broadcast concerning the relations between the pair. Pope fancied that Teresa had started the rumours, and he not only attacked her own character, but was persistent in his desire that Patty should leave her family and live by herself—the most fatal step she could have taken in the circumstances.

In a long letter to Caryll, dated December 25, Pope makes a passing allusion to the "railing papers" about the "Odyssey," which, he says, give him very little concern. Far more serious is the confident asseveration which had been spread over the town to the effect that "Your god-daughter, Miss Patty, and I lived two or three years since in a manner that was reported to you

as giving scandal to many; that, upon your writing to me upon it, I consulted with her, and sent you an excusive, alleviating answer, but did after that, privately of myself, write to you a full confession how much I myself disapproved the way of life, and owning the prejudice done her, charging it on myself, and declaring that I wished to break off what I acted against my conscience, etc., and that she, being at the same time spoken to by a lady of your acquaintance, at your instigation, did absolutely deny to alter any part of her conduct, were it ever so disreputable or exceptionable."

Worse still, it was reported that Pope had brought Martha acquainted with a noble lord, and into an intimacy with some others, merely to get quit of her himself. The poet reminds his friend that they had conferred together on the subject of the scandal, and that Caryll had expressed his complete satisfaction with the explanations then given. Mrs. Caryll also had written a cordial letter to Patty, owning that she had heard of the rumour, but all that Pope had told her husband "was so highly to your credit and commendation that it caused no change in my thoughts about the matter; and I really was glad that you had such a friend in the world, nor can I ever hope that anything should change him from ever being so to you."

Pope tried to drive the war into the enemy's country by explaining that Martha has had less of his conversation during the past two years than ever before, and that when they met the time was taken up with a "preachment" from him against the evil consequences of another sort of company which her

family were inclined to keep. It was the misfortune of that household to be governed like a ship—the head guided by the tail; "and God is my witness," he concludes, "I am as much a friend to her soul as to her person: the good qualities of the former made me her friend. No creature has better natural dispositions, or would act more rightly and reasonably in every duty, did she act by herself and for herself."

Caryll's belief in his friend was unaffected by the breath of scandal, and for the time being the storm blew over. His reply must have been kind and reassuring, for upon receiving it Pope wrote, in evident relief of mind:

"I am as confident of your honour as of my own. Let lies perish and be confounded, and the author of them, if not forgiven, be despised. So we men say; but I am afraid women cannot, and your injured kinswoman is made too uneasy by these sinister practices, which, especially from one's own family, are terrible."

CHAPTER XXXI

1726

The End of the "Odyssey"—Discontent of Broome and Fenton—Pope's Benevolence—Swift's Visit to England—Carriage Accident

EARLY in 1726 the three-years' labour on the "Odyssey" came to an end. On January 20 Pope wrote, to acknowledge the very last packet of notes from Broome, and to wish him joy on the accomplishment of their task.

For three long years they had dragged their common load, lightening each other's toil, and friends to the last. "Why," he asks, "should we not go together in triumph, and demand the flitch of bacon at Dunmow, or some such signal reward?"

Neither Broome nor Fenton felt that their union with Pope qualified either of them to demand the flitch of bacon. In a postscript to the "Odyssey" the senior partner had stated that his assistants were only responsible for five books, whereas twelve was the actual number. Fenton was too indolent to raise more than a faint protest against this mis-statement, and that only in a private letter. The time-serving Broome, who had expected to gain great credit from his connection with Pope, com-

plained that the great man had revised away much of the reputation rightly due to his partners.[1] Worse still, he had falsely attributed to them certain of the more unsuccessful portions of the work.

"His dulness is bright enough to be our glory," wrote poor Broome. "He is king of Parnassus, and claims what is good in our translation by prerogative royal. . . . But, in the meantime, where is his veracity? One time or other, the truth shall be publicly known. Till then, I give him leave to shine like a candle in the dark, which is lighted up to its own diminution, and shines only to go out in stink."

Broome was weak enough to sign a statement, printed at the end of the translation, to the effect that "If my performance has merit either in these [the notes] or in any part of the translation, namely, the sixth, eleventh, and eighteenth books,[2] it is but just to attribute it to the judgment and care of Mr. Pope, by whose hand every sheet was corrected. His other and much more able assistant was Mr. Fenton in the fourth and the twentieth books." Fenton, who had desired to work anonymously, was as near being annoyed at Broome's declaration as was possible to one of his easy-going temper, since he had "retired to the extremest brink of veracity" in his efforts to conceal his share in the undertaking.

Broome took care to let his friends know the true facts of the case, with the result that the clamour against the "undertaker" of the "Odyssey" waxed louder and more vehement. Pope was both annoyed

[1] Pope let it be understood that the merit of the work done by his assistants was due to his careful revisal and correction.

[2] Broome had translated eight books and Fenton four.

and distressed at the hostility which had been aroused by his little bit of sharp practice. That he was unable to perceive anything reprehensible in his own conduct is proved by a letter in which he assured Broome, of all people in the world, that he knew himself to be an honest and friendly man, nor did he think that he had ever acted an unfair or disreputable part with the public. "This indeed is my sore place; for I care not what they say of my poetry, but a man's morals are of a tenderer nature, and higher consequence."

There are proofs enough and to spare that the poet, whatever his principles of honour, was not wanting in tenderness, and it is only fair to follow the narrative of a shady transaction with an account of a kind and generous action. Some fifteen years before he had been introduced to a Mrs. Cope, a first cousin of Caryll's, whose conversation left a most favourable impression on his mind.[1] Mrs. Cope had since been deserted by her husband, who, while in service abroad, had bigamously married another woman. She had recently gone to France, where she hoped to meet her brother, and receive some assistance from him. But these hopes proved vain. Pope had sent her money some months before, but he now learnt that her resources were exhausted and that the poor woman, who was in failing health, actually wanted bread. He asked Caryll to help her, recommended her to the good

[1] On July 19, 1711, Pope wrote to Caryll: "I am infinitely obliged to you for bringing me acquainted with Mrs. Cope, from whom I heard more wit and sense in two hours than almost all the sex ever spoke in their whole lives."

offices of his old friend, the Abbé Southcote, and himself undertook to make her a regular allowance of twenty pounds a year.[1]

Another instance of his generous sympathy towards poor ladies shines out of the following note to Mrs. Cæsar about one of the subscribers to the "Odyssey":

"MADAM,

"Besides the pleasure of telling you and Mr. Cæsar how truly I am your servant, I have an occasion to trouble you with an affair of which you know more than myself, as I believe. I received the enclosed from a lady whom I suppose to be of your acquaintance. I beg you to inform her (since I see by the date she lives at Hertford) that I have sent the three books, as she required, to Wyatt the bookseller's, and I have added the two last also, which I desire her acceptance of. I am entirely a stranger to the circumstances she mentions, but sincerely concerned for the misfortune of such a change to any person; if it be, as she says, that to make the second payment were an imprudence *in her condition*, I fear the having made the first may *now* be so too; and you will oblige me if you can find any decent way of returning those three guineas, which I will righteously repay you. I am troubled at such an instance of want

[1] Another *protégée* of Pope's was a poor girl named Betty Fletcher, who, being sickly and unable to work, was recommended by him to the kindness of his old friends, the Dancastles. At the time of writing (this letter is undated) the poet explains that he is in low water and has learned, much against his will, that charity begins at home. Otherwise, he would far rather support Betty himself than ask aid of another.

as this seems to be in one who has (probably) the honour to be known to you, and consequently must be a concern to you also.

"Believe, madam, I am, etc.,

"A. POPE."[1]

In March Swift paid his long-deferred visit to England, and made Pope's house his headquarters during the four months of his stay. The dean brought over the manuscript of "Gulliver's Travels," for the anonymous publication of which Pope and Erasmus Lewis made the arrangements. The ostensible object of his visit was to inspect the papers at Down Park, with a view to writing the life of the late Lord Oxford, a project that was never carried out. But the motives that induced him to take the journey to England at this time were political as well as literary. He desired to represent the affairs of Ireland to the Prime Minister in "a true light"—that is, a light approved by himself. Swift had given notable proof of his power by defeating the scheme for "Wood's halfpence," and though this could hardly have made him popular with English statesmen, he seems to have cherished some lurking hope that by fear, if not by favour, he might gain the minister's ear, and recover a measure of political influence. Then again, the Princess of Wales was known to be a lady of strong mind and latitudinarian views. When she came into power she would not, like Anne, oppose the promotion of a brilliant man merely because he was accused of licentious writing.

[1] From the unpublished MS.

Failing the princess, there was Mrs. Howard, the favourite, whose influence might be even more useful than that of the future queen.

But all these hopes and ambitions were doomed to disappointment. The dean was civilly received by Walpole, and was presented to the princess at Leicester House, while, thanks to the introduction of Pope and Gay, he quickly became on intimate terms with the lady of Marble Hill. On March 23 Pope wrote to inform Lord Oxford that the dean had arrived in England, and adds :

"He is in perfect health and spirits, the joy of all here who know him, as he was eleven years ago, and I never received a more sensible satisfaction than in having been now two days with him."

If neglected by the politicians, Swift was welcomed with joy by the wits. Not only Pope, but Arbuthnot, Congreve, Gay, and Bolingbroke made much of him, and accompanied him on his visits to the country-houses of his friends. On June 20 Pope wrote to tell Mrs. Howard, who was then at Leicester House, that her cow had got a calf which had been christened Calfurnia.

"In order to celebrate this birthday, we had a cold dinner at Marble Hill. Mrs. Susan offered us wine upon the occasion, and upon such an occasion we could not refuse it. Our entertainment consisted of flesh and fish, and the lettuce of a Greek island called Cos. We have some thought of dining there to-morrow to celebrate the day after the birthday, and on Friday to celebrate the day after that, where we intend to entertain Dean Swift, because we think your hall the most

delightful room in the world, except that where you are."

A few weeks later Swift had just returned from a fortnight's ramble with Pope and Gay, and, in consequence of Stella's sudden illness, was preparing for his departure to Ireland. It is evident that he left his friends with a heavy heart, though he told Pope: "I had rather live in forty Irelands than under the frequent disquiets of hearing you are out of order. I always apprehend it most after a great dinner; for the least transgression of yours, if it be but two bits and one sup more than your stint, is a great debauch, for which you certainly pay more than those sots who are carried drunk to bed." [1]

In acknowledgment of the hospitality he had received at Twickenham, Swift gave his host a pair of silver cups engraved with the following inscription: "Jonathan Swift—Alex^ro^ Pope: Pignus amicitæ exiguum ingentis." Pope declared that the dean's name was engraved elsewhere than upon the cups, which he might throw into the Thames without injury to his memory of the giver. He found himself after Swift's departure like a man in exile, for home was no home without the dean. He feels as if he had had a limb lopped off, and complains: "I shall never more think of Lord

[1] Pope is supposed to have hastened his end by eating high-seasoned dishes and drinking spirits. Mrs. Howard sometimes reproved him for his intemperance, and Lord Bathurst compliments her on her candour. "Yesterday," he says in one letter to the lady, "I had a little piece of salmon just caught out of the Severn, and a fresh pike that was brought me from the other side of your house out of the Thames. He ate as much as he could of both, and insisted upon his moderation, because he made his dinner upon one dish."

Cobham's, the woods of Exeter, or the pleasing prospect of Bibury, but your idea must be joined with them, nor see one seat in my own garden, or one room in my house, without a phantom of you sitting or walking before me." Pope thought that he and Swift were the only people among their acquaintance qualified to live on the mountains of Wales, a phrase which stood for the Ultima Thule in the poet's mouth. "The doctor[1] goes to cards, Gay to Court; one loses money, one loses his time; another of our friends labours to be unambitious, but he labours in an unwilling soil.[2] One lady you like has too much of France to be fit for Wales.[3] Another is too much a subject to princes and potentates to relish that wild taste of liberty and poverty.[4] Mr. Congreve is too sick to bear a thin air, and she that leads him too rich to enjoy anything.[5] Lord Peterborough can go to any climate, but never stay in any. Lord Bathurst is too great an husbandman to like barren hills, except they are his own to improve."

Pope's life contained so few "incidents," in the dramatic sense of the word, that a carriage accident in which he had a narrow escape from drowning looms large in the annals of Twickenham. Early in September he was driving home from Dawley in Lord Burlington's coach when, owing to a little bridge having broken down, he was overturned into the water. The windows were up, and the water rose as high as the knots of the poet's periwig

[1] Arbuthnot. [2] Bolingbroke.
[3] Lady Bolingbroke. [4] Mrs. Howard.
[5] The young Duchess of Marlborough.

before the footman could break the glass and get him out. Pope got a bad gash across his hand, and was afraid that he would lose the use of two fingers, but his surgeon assured him that no tendons were cut—only nerves—and that his fingers were safe. Gay and Bolingbroke, who both sent accounts of the accident to Swift, state that it was the right hand which was injured, but Arbuthnot, who, as a doctor, ought to have known, says it was the left.

Pope enjoyed the importance of his adventure, and made the worst of his injuries, assuring Swift that he had lost two fingers. The dean replied that he hoped the statement about the fingers was only a jest, since other letters informed him that Pope had only lost some blood, which indeed he could ill spare, since he had nothing but blood and bones to venture. The poet did not soon recover from his injury, for as late as November 16 he complains that "the two least fingers of one hand hang impediments to the other." On the same day Voltaire, who was now staying at Dawley with Bolingbroke, addressed a belated letter of condolence to Pope :

"I hear this moment of your sad adventure. That water you fell in was not Hippocrene's water, otherwise it would have respected you. Indeed, I am concerned beyond expression for the danger you have been in, and more for your wound. Is it possible that those fingers which have written 'The Rape of the Lock' and 'The Critic,' which have dressed 'Homer' so becomingly in an English coat, should have been so barbarously treated? Let the hand of Dennis, or your poetasters, be cut off;

yours is sacred. I hope, sir, you are now perfectly recovered. Really, your accident concerns me as much as all the disasters of a master ought to affect his scholar. I am sincerely, sir, with the admiration which you deserve, your most humble servant." [1]

Early in November "Gulliver's Travels" made its appearance anonymously, and the secret of the authorship was at first carefully kept. Pope and Gay, writing to Swift on November 17, give an interesting account of the reception of this book, keeping up the fiction that the authorship was unknown.

"About ten days ago," they relate, "a book was published here of the 'Travels' of one Gulliver, which has been the conversation of the whole town ever since. The whole impression sold in a week; and nothing is more diverting than to hear the different opinions people give of it, though all agree in liking it extremely. It is generally said that you are the author; but I am told the bookseller declares he knows not from what hand it came. From the highest to the lowest it is universally read, from the Cabinet Council to the nursery. The politicians, to a man, agree that it is free from particular reflections, but that the satire on general societies of men is too severe. . . . Lord [Bolingbroke] is the person who least approves of it, blaming it as a design of evil consequence to depreciate human nature. . . . The Duchess Dowager of Marlborough is in raptures at it; she says she can dream of nothing else since she read

[1] Pope did not care for Voltaire, who once drove Mrs. Pope from the table at Twickenham by the grossness of his conversation.

it. She declares that she has now found out that her whole life has been lost in caressing the worst part of mankind, and treating the best as her foes. . . . Among lady critics, some have found out that Mr. Gulliver had a particular malice to maids-of-honour. Those of them who frequent the church say his design is impious, and that it is an insult on Providence, by depreciating the works of the Creator. Notwithstanding, I am told that the princess has read it with great pleasure. . . . It has passed Lords and Commons *nemine contradicente*; and the whole town, men, women, and children, are full of it."

In a confidential letter written about the same time, Pope openly congratulates the dean upon his book, which he prophesies will be hereafter the wonder of all men. He finds no considerable man very angry at the book. Some thought it too bold, and too general a satire, but none of any consequence accused it of any particular reflections, so that the author need not have been so secret on that head. The dean, in his reply, keeps up the fiction that he has no personal connection with "Gulliver's Travels." He says that he has received the book, and he discusses various objections that have been raised to it, concluding with—"a bishop here said that the book was full of improbable lies, and, for his part, he hardly believed a word of it; and so much for 'Gulliver.'"

"Gulliver" was the sensation of the winter of 1726–7. Arbuthnot prophesied that the book would have as great a run as "The Pilgrim's Progress," and wrote to Swift that "Lord

Scarborough, who is no inventor of stories, told us that he fell in company with a master of a ship, who told him that he was very well acquainted with 'Gulliver,' but that the printer had mistaken: that he lived in Wapping, and not in Rotherhithe."[1]

[1] Sir Walter Scott says that Swift was supposed to have given the copyright of "Gulliver" to Pope, who sold it for £300. But the negotiations appear to have been conducted through Erasmus Lewis, who sold the copyright to Motte for £200, and there is no evidence that Pope benefited by the sale.

CHAPTER XXXII

1727

The "Miscellanies"—Swift's Last Visit to England—Death of George I.—Letters to Cromwell—Gay's Refusal of a Place at Court.

DURING Swift's visit to Pope in the summer of 1726, the two friends had planned to publish some volumes of "Miscellanies," which should contain their ephemeral pieces in prose and verse. Some of these were the fragmentary productions of the Scriblerus Club,[1] while others were personal or topical skits, which, after being passed round a friendly circle in manuscript, had been snapped by the bookseller and printed without permission in catch-penny collections. On March 8 Pope wrote to the dean :

"Our 'Miscellany' is now quite printed. I am prodigiously pleased with this joint volume, in which, methinks, we look like friends side by side, serious and merry by turns, conversing

[1] In these Gay and Arbuthnot also had a hand. The more important of the pieces published in these early volumes were "The Memoir of P. P., Clerk of this Parish," a parody of Burnet's History, "The Key to the Lock," and the satires on Curll, Dennis, and Addison.

interchangeably, and walking down hand in hand to prosperity, not in the stiff forms of learned authors, flattering each other and setting the rest of mankind at nought, but in a free, unimportant, natural, easy manner, diverting others just as we diverted ourselves. . . ."

The first two volumes appeared in June, but were received without enthusiasm by the public. The Preface, dated May 27, 1727, is undoubtedly from the pen of Pope. According to this composition, the two principal authors of the "Miscellanies," having been extremely ill-treated by the booksellers, were publishing, for self-protection, correct copies of their lighter productions. Some of these had already stolen into the world against the will of the authors, while others might share the same fate. The authors admit that they have written some things in the levity of youth which they regret, but cannot disown, while they apologise for certain railleries, more especially those on Addison and Vanbrugh. The collection, as a whole, consists of their follies rather than their studies, their idlenesses rather than their works. They console themselves with the reflection, not too well founded, that all the pieces are innocent, and that most of them have a moral tendency.

"We declare," concludes the Preface, "that this collection contains every piece which, in the idlest humour, we have written; not only such as came under our review or correction, but many others which, however unfinished, are not now in our power to suppress. Whatsoever was in our own possession at the publishing hereof, or of

which no copy was gone abroad, we have actually destroyed to prevent all possibility of the like treatment."[1]

Motte bought the copyright of the "Miscellanies" for £22·5, Gay and Arbuthnot receiving £50 for their share in the Scriblerus productions, while Swift and Pope divided the remainder. The sale of the volumes was slow, and Motte was dilatory in payment, having to be dunned several times by Pope, who was the only man of business among the authors concerned.

Swift paid his last visit to England this year, arriving about the middle of April and remaining till the end of September. Again he was Pope's guest at Twickenham during part of his stay, but the arrangement was not altogether a success. The dean was suffering from deafness and giddiness, and these ailments did not improve his temper. He could not hear his host's weak voice, and Pope's anxious civilities irritated him. "I am very uneasy," he writes to Sheridan, "because so many of our acquaintance come to see us, and I cannot be seen. Besides, Mr. Pope is too sickly and complaisant; therefore I resolve to go somewhere else." He has described the difficulties of intercourse with his friend in the following lines:

> Pope has the talent well to speak,
> But not to reach the ear;
> His loudest voice is low and weak,
> The dean too deaf to hear.

[1] Only two volumes appeared in 1727, a third in 1728, and a fourth in 1732.

Awhile they on each other look,
Then different studies choose;
The dean sits plodding o'er a book,
Pope walks and courts the Muse.

On June 11 George I. died of apoplexy on the way to Hanover, and the hopes of the Tory party ran high. Swift and Gay had courted both the Princess and Mrs. Howard, and it was thought that their fortunes were assured. The dean hoped for preferment in England, while Gay confidently expected a lucrative place at Court, in return for his verses on the future queen, and his "Fables," written for the young Duke of Cumberland. It was generally believed that the Whigs would be turned out, and that Walpole, who had sided with the late king against the prince, would be disgraced. But Sir Robert contrived to gain the ear of the queen, and presently, to the amazement of politicians and courtiers, it was discovered that the reins of government were to be left in his capable, unscrupulous hands, while his seat in the saddle of office was even firmer than before. Pope, as usual, stood outside all the excitement and agitation. For the present, he was content to be a spectator, not an actor in the political comedy.

"The great and sudden event which has just happened," he wrote to Bethel on June 24, "puts the whole world (I mean this whole world) into a new state. The only use I have, shall, or wish to make of it is to observe the disparity of men from themselves in a week's time; the desultory leaping and catching of new motions, new modes, new measures; and that strange spirit and life

with which men, broken and disappointed, resume their hopes, their solicitations, their ambitions! It would be worth your while, as a philosopher, to be busy in these observations, and to come hither to see the fury and bustle of the bees this hot season, without coming so near as to be stung by them."

Towards the end of August Swift heard from Sheridan that Stella's illness had taken a fatal turn, and that she was rapidly sinking. Sick, disappointed, and heart-broken, Swift could no longer bear the complaisance of his Twickenham host. On the last day of August he went to London, where he could be alone with his grief. Sheridan, who was anxious about the dean's health, both mental and physical, wrote to inquire further news of him from Pope.

"I am both obliged and alarmed by your letter," replied the poet. "What you mention of a particular friend of the dean's being upon the brink of another world gives me great pain; for it makes me, in tenderness to him, wish him with you, and at the same time I fear he is not in a condition to make the journey. . . . He talks of returning to Ireland in three weeks, if he recovers sufficiently; if not, he will stay here this winter. Upon pretence of some very unavoidable occasion, he went to London four days since, where I see him as often as he will let me. I was extremely concerned at his *opiniâtreté* in leaving me; but he shall not get rid of the friend, though he may of the house."

Swift told no one of Stella's illness, and he shunned his friends during the last days of his

stay. He returned to Ireland at the end of September, and remained with Stella till her death in the following January. Pope was hurt at the dean's abrupt departure, but he wrote in his usual friendly style to condole with him on his broken health.

"I was sorry to find you could think yourself easier in any house than in mine," he says, "though at the same time I can allow for a tenderness in your way of thinking, even when it seemed to want that tenderness." Swift replied in what was, for him, an apologetic tone. He had thought it best, considering his health, to return to his own home, where, with a large house, and his own servants about him, he could be sick and deaf without making his friends uneasy.

"You are the best and kindest creature in the world," he continues, "and I know nobody, alive or dead, to whom I am so much obliged; and if ever you made me angry it was for your too much care about me. . . . But it has pleased God that you are not in a state of health to be mortified with the care and sickness of a friend. Two sick friends never did well together: such an office is fitter for servants and humble companions, to whom it is wholly indifferent whether we give them trouble or no. The case would be quite otherwise if you were with me; you could refuse to see anybody, and here is a large house where we need not hear each other if we were both sick. I have a race of orderly, elderly people of both sexes at command, who are of no consequence, and have gifts proper for attending us—who can bawl

when I am deaf, and tread softly when I am only giddy and would sleep."

Pope's own health was worse than usual in the autumn of this year. "My old complaints of the stomach," he tells Caryll, "are turned into an inveterate colic, which seldom leaves me in any lively sensation of life for two days together." He begs once again for the return of his letters, having before his eyes the fear of a rascally bookseller, who had lately printed some that were very unfit to see the light. This is an allusion to a small collection of his youthful letters to Henry Cromwell, which had been sold by that gentleman's ex-mistress, Mrs. Thomas, to Curll, and published the previous year. They attracted a good deal of attention at the time—admiration from the poet's friends for their noble sentiments and reprobation from his enemies for certain loose expressions. Fenton, commenting on the volume in a letter to Broome, remarks ironically that he is delighted with nothing more than with "that air of sincerity, those professions of esteem and respect, and that deference paid to his friend's judgment in poetry, which I have sometimes seen expressed to others, and I doubt not with the same cordial affection."

Pope openly declared that the letters must have been stolen, since Cromwell at first denied that he had given them away; but Mrs. Thomas wrote to her former protector to explain that she had lent some of them to an ingenious person, who was so delighted with them that he had conveyed them to the press, not altogether with her consent nor wholly without it. She had thought them too good

to be lost in oblivion, and did not imagine that their publication would annoy anybody.

"The public, viz. all persons of taste and judgment," she argues, "would be pleased with so agreeable an amusement; Mr. Cromwell could not be angry since it was but justice to his merit to publish the solemn and private professions of love, gratitude, and veneration made him by so celebrated an author; and surely Mr. Pope ought not to resent the publication, since the early pregnancy of his genius was no dishonour to his character. And yet, had either of you been asked, common modesty would have obliged you to refuse what you would not be displeased with, if done without your knowledge. And besides—to end all dispute—you had been pleased to make me a free gift of them, to do what I pleased with them. . . ."

On July 6 Cromwell wrote to explain to Pope that when Dennis had charged him with giving the letters to a mistress, he had positively denied it; but, when other letters addressed to "Sappho" appeared in the papers, he began to fear that he must be guilty. He says that he has not seen "Sappho" for seven years, and that her assertion that he had given her the letters to do as she would with them is straining the point too far.

"The great value she expresses for all you write," he continues, "and her passion for having them, I believe, was what prevailed upon me to let her keep them. . . . As people in great straits bring forth from their hoards of old gold and most valued jewels, so Sappho had recourse to her hid treasure of letters, and played off not only

yours to me, but all those to herself, as the lady's last stake, into the press. As for me, I hope when you shall coolly consider the many thousand instances of our being deluded by the females, since that great original of Adam by Eve, you will have a more favourable thought of the undesigning error of your faithful friend and humble servant."

George II. was crowned on October 11. A little later the queen's household was settled, and Gay, who for so long had waited open-mouthed for a place, was appointed Gentleman-usher to the little Princess Louisa, a child of two. Though the post was practically a sinecure, worth £150 a year, Gay foolishly refused it on the ground of his advanced age—he being then thirty-nine. In reality, he was bitterly disappointed at not having been offered a place of more importance, after twelve years' patient attendance on Court favour. His friends were ill-advised enough to applaud his independent spirit, though that independence left him at the mercy of fortune.

Pope wrote a long congratulatory letter to Gay on this "happy dismission from Court dependence." He expects to find his friend the better and honester man for it many years hence, and probably the healthfuller and cheerfuller into the bargain. "Princes and peers (the lackeys of princes), and ladies (the fools of peers), will smile on you less; but men of worth, and real friends, will look on you the better. The only steps to the favour of the great are such complacencies, such compliances, such distant decorums, as delude them in their vanities, as

engage them in their passions.[1] He is their greatest favourite who is the falsest; and when a man, by such vile gradations, arrives at the height of grandeur and power, he is then at best but in a circumstance to be hated and in a condition to be hanged for serving their ends." The letter concludes with the promise: "While I have a shilling you shall have sixpence, nay, eightpence, if I can contrive to live upon a groat."

Swift, being urged by Pope to congratulate Gay upon his folly, wrote a poetical epistle, in the course of which he indignantly inquires:

> Say, had the Court no better place to choose
> For thee, than make a day-nurse of thy Muse?
> How cheaply had thy liberty been sold
> To squire a royal girl of two years old;
> In leading-strings her infant steps to guide,
> Or with her go-cart amble by her side!

[1] This comes strangely enough from a man who gloried in his familiarity with "great men."

CHAPTER XXXIII

1728

"The Beggar's Opera"—Third Volume of the "Miscellanies"—"The Bathos"—Counter-attacks

THE year 1728 was an eventful one in the chronicle of Pope's life, as also in that of his nearest friends. It was the year of "The Dunciad," *The Beggar's Opera*, and the famous third volume of the "Miscellanies." "Gulliver's Travels" was still "the book of the day" in London and Dublin. It is remarkable that three intimate friends should, in the space of nine months, have produced three works of sensational popularity, and that two out of the three should have attained a lasting fame.

It had been an open secret for some time past that Pope was engaged on a poem called "Dulness," and Swift, who had seen it in manuscript, and knew that it contained a complimentary address to himself, was eager for its appearance. Pope, however, had his own reasons for holding it back, and *The Beggar's Opera* was allowed the precedence.

"John Gay's opera is just on the point of delivery," wrote Pope to Swift in January. "It

may be called, considering its subject, a jail-delivery. . . . Whether it succeeds or not, it will make a great noise, but whether in claps or hisses I know not. At worst, it is in its own nature a thing which he can lose no reputation by, as he lays none upon it."

The "great noise" proved to be of claps, not hisses, and on February 15 Gay was able to send a glowing account of the success of his work, which was being acted to crowded houses every night. It had the then extraordinary run of thirty-two consecutive nights, and was played, in all, sixty-two nights in the course of the season. In the letter to Swift Gay congratulates himself on having "made no interest either for approbation or money, nor has anybody been pressed to take tickets for my benefits, notwithstanding which I think I shall make an addition to my fortune of between six and seven hundred pounds. . . . Lord Cobham says that I should have printed it (the opera) in Italian over against the English, that the ladies might have understood what they read. The outlandish (as they now call it) opera has been so thin of late that some have called that 'The Beggar's Opera,' and if the run continues I fear I shall have remonstrances drawn up against me by the Royal Academy of Music."

Swift was anxious, according to his wont, that Gay should make the best of his success, and husband his fortune. He hopes that Gay has dedicated his opera, and got the usual fee of twenty guineas. He ought also to buy an annuity, and put a ring-fence round his little capital. The dean

is annoyed at the idea that "the dog Rich," Gay's impresario, should make three or four thousand pounds by sitting still; he ought certainly to make his author a present of two or three hundred guineas. *The Beggar's Opera* presently found its way to Ireland, where it "knocked down 'Gulliver,'" and was continually acted, the house being crammed, and the Lord-Lieutenant "laughing his heart out."

The popularity of the work was increased by stories about the way the ministers took the political allusions, and rumours concerning the love-affairs of the famous Polly Peachem (Miss Fenton), who eventually become Duchess of Bolton. The opera was preached against as well as applauded, and while Swift declared that to expose vice and make people laugh with innocence did more good than all the ministers of State from Adam to Walpole, there were not wanting sober heads who averred that the hero-worship of Macheath and his fellows made highway robbery a fascinating profession, and that every time the work was performed it sent a thief to the gallows.

Early in the year Pope told the dean that the third volume of their "Miscellanies" was shortly to appear, among the contents being "The Bathos;[1] or, the Art of Sinking in Poetry," which he has entirely methodised, and "in a manner written it all." He is sorry that he cannot yet send his *chef-d'œuvre*, the poem on "Dulness," which, after he is dead and gone, will be printed with a large commentary, and lettered on the back

[1] Also called "The Profund."

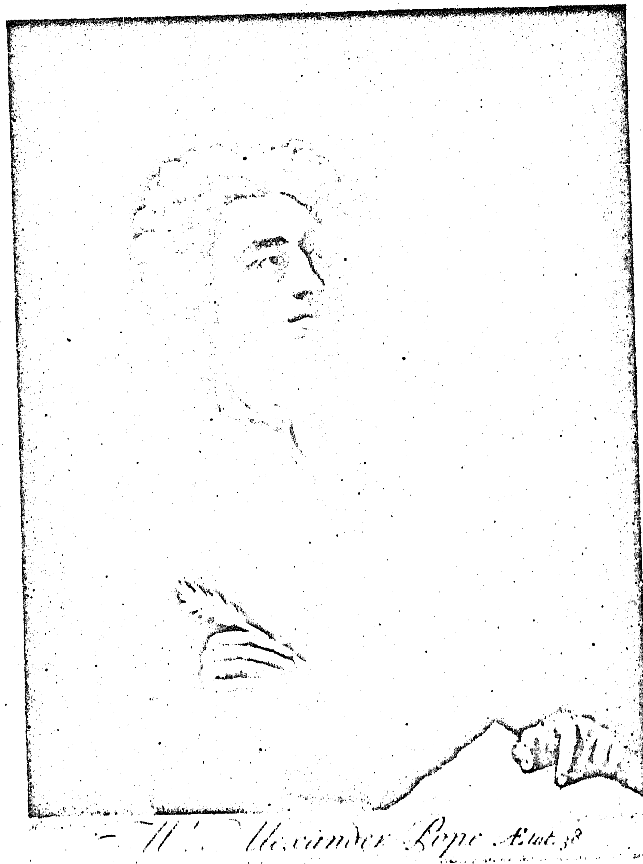
"Pope's Dulness." He sends the "Address" to Swift, however, which he begs his friend to consider, reconsider, criticise, hypercriticise, and consult about with Sheridan, Delany, and all the "literary of Dublin."[1]

A month later Bolingbroke writes that Pope's "Dulness" grows and flourishes. "It will indeed be a noble work; the many will stare at it, the few will smile, and all his patrons, from 'Bickerstaff' to 'Gulliver,' will rejoice to see themselves adorned in that immortal piece." All this whetted Swift's interest and curiosity. "Now why does not Mr. Pope publish his 'Dulness'?" he asked Gay. "The rogues he mawls will die of themselves in peace, and so will his friends, and so there will be neither punishment nor reward."

Pope's reason for delaying the appearance of "The Dunciad" seems to have been due to his desire that so tremendous a satire should have more justification for its existence than the skits which had already appeared against him. He published the third volume of the "Miscellanies" in March, in the hope that the personal attacks in "The Bathos" would "draw" the various writers ridiculed. It was a case of "Will you tread on the tail of my coat?"

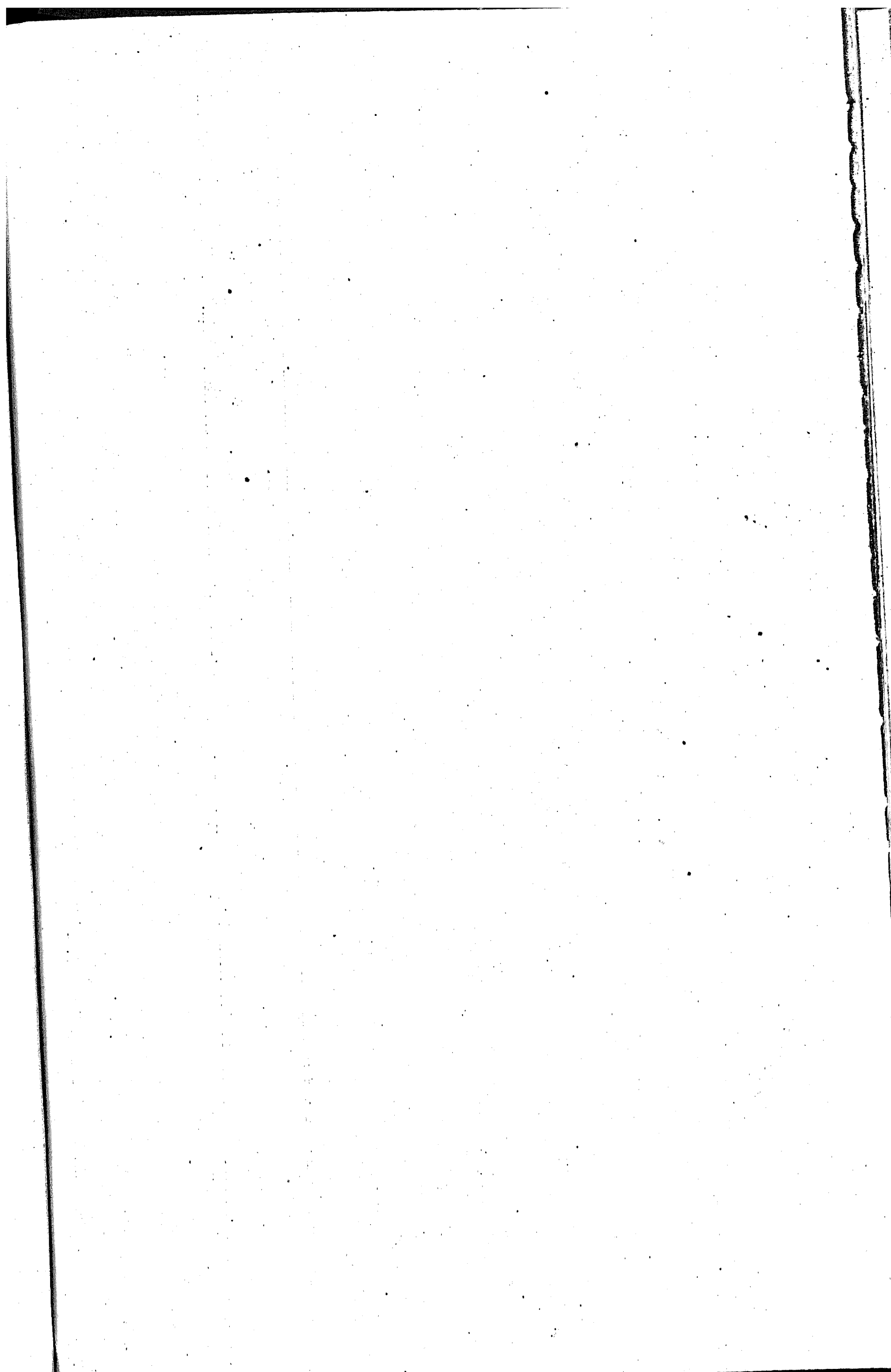
The satire was, in the main, as legitimate as it

[1] And thou! whose sense, whose humour, and whose rage
At once can teach, delight, and lash the age,
Whether thou choose Cervantes' serious air,
Or laugh and shake in Rabelais' easy chair;
Praise courts and monarchs, or extol mankind;
Or thy grieved country's copper chains unbind;
Attend, whatever title please thine ear,
Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff, or Gulliver.



From a mezzotint by J. Simon after the painting by M. Dahl, 1727.

ALEXANDER POPE AT THE AGE OF 38.



was lively, but there was one section which consisted merely of stupid personalities. This deals with the several kinds of geniuses in "The Profund," and the marks and characters of each. The writers are compared to various species of birds, fishes, and reptiles, and the initials of their names in each case are given. Pope afterwards declared that he had put the letters at random. The poet's old enemies appear among them—Dennis, Gildon, and Oldmixon, as porpoises, Ambrose Philips as a tortoise, Webster and Theobald as eels, Edward Ward and James Moore (afterwards Moore-Smythe) as frogs. The unfortunate Broome, who had done so much for Pope, signed a false postscript, giving up the credit of five books, and furnished the notes to the "Iliad" gratis, appears both as a parrot and a tortoise. A couplet from Broome's "Epistle to Fenton" is also quoted in the chapter on "The True Genius for the Profund, and by what it is constituted."

But Blackmore is the chief victim, the majority of lines quoted in illustration of "The Bathos" being taken from his poems. Blackmore's crime had been that, in his "Essay on Polite Writing" (1717) he had said, after alluding with abhorrence to profane wit, "I cannot but here take notice that one of these champions of vice is the reputed author of a detestable paper that has lately been handed about in manuscript, and now appears in print, in which the godless author has burlesqued the First Psalm of David in so obscene and profane a manner that perhaps no age ever saw such an insolent affront to the established religion of their

country, and this, good heaven! with impunity. A sad demonstration, this, of the low ebb to which British virtue is reduced in these degenerate times."

Next to Blackmore, Theobald was the main butt. Pope had nursed his wrath against "the Restorer" of Shakespeare for two years, and he now gave vent to his spleen, hoping no doubt, that Theobald would retaliate as viciously, and thus justify his election as hero of "The Dunciad." Several quotations are made from passages in Theobald's plays to illustrate the art of sinking in poetry, but the most venomous, as also the most brilliant, onslaught is made in some lines entitled "A Fragment of a Satire." These contain, besides "The Character of Addison," the almost equally famous passage relating to such verbal critics as Sewell and Theobald. After a slash at Gildon and Dennis, the satirist continues:

> Did some more sober critic come abroad—
> If wrong, I smiled; if right, I kissed the rod.
> Pains, reading, study, are their just pretence,
> And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense.
> Commas and points they set exactly right,
> And 'twere a sin to rob them of their mite;
> In future ages how their fame will spread
> For writing triplets and restoring *ed*:
> Yet ne'er one sprig of laurel graced these ribalds,
> From sanguine Sew (ell)[1] down to piddling Tibbalds:

[1] George Sewell, a dramatic writer, who had the temerity to publish a seventh volume of "Shakespeare," as a supplement to Pope's edition. When the satire was embodied in the "Epistle to Arbuthnot," Bentley took the place of Sewell, and the line ran:

> From slashing Bentley down to piddling Tibbalds.

> Each wight who reads not, and but scans and spells,
> Each word-catcher that lives on syllables,
> Even such small critics some regard may claim,
> Preserved in Milton's or in Shakespeare's name.
> Pretty! in amber to observe the forms
> Of hair, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms!
> The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,
> But wonder how the devil they got there.

It is generally believed, owing to the industry with which Pope propagated the story, that the press and booksellers' shops were flooded with scurrilous pamphlets, articles, and letters from victims of "The Bathos," all aimed at the character or person of their persecutor. But this is a gross exaggeration. In the two months that elapsed between the publication of the "Miscellanies" and the appearance of "The Dunciad," the more celebrated of the persons satirised kept silence, while the so-called "attacks" which found their way into the papers were few in number, and, with one or two exceptions, of slight importance.

A temperate and dignified letter from Theobald appeared in *Mist's Journal* for April 27. If Pope is angry with him for having attempted to restore Shakespeare, he hopes that the public is not, and trusts that his sheets may awaken his rival editor to same degree of accuracy in his next edition. He had treated him with deference, even tenderness, but to set anything right after Mr. Pope had adjusted the whole was a presumption not to be forgiven. As his "Remarks on the whole Works of Shakespeare" would closely attend upon the publication of Pope's second edition, Theobald

ventured to promise he would then give above five hundred more emendations that would escape Mr. Pope and all his assistants. He steadily refused to make any answer to the personal attacks against himself. Blackmore, Defoe, Ducket, Aaron Hill, Philips, Ward, and Welsted made no answer at this time.

In a very different vein was Dennis's reply. When it came to playing with initial letters, he too could take a hand in the game. For example, the letters A.P-e gave the same idea of an ape as the "little gentleman's" face, shape, and stature, while his nature was as ludicrously mischievous as a monkey's. Dennis scoffs at the report that this "animalculæ of an author" was writing "The Progress of Dulness," since those who had read his books had already seen the progress of dulness.

But the most damaging counter-attack was one which appeared in *Mist's Journal* for March 30, by a writer whose identity has never been discovered. Pope attributed it to Theobald, but it is quite unlike Theobald's style. Entitled "An Essay on the Art of a Poet's sinking in Reputation," the author gives advice as to the manner in which this feat may best be performed. He should throw out frequent compositions in the three different styles of the Vituperative, the Prurient, and the Atheistical, while he should dedicate the Prurient to a patroness of unquestioned virtue. In revising, let him forget even to discharge the dull duty of an editor, and when he is upon such a project let him generously lend the disadvantage of his name to promote the

discredit of an exorbitant subscription. He should push upon the world three new "Miscellany" volumes of old and second-hand wares. He should descend into Homer without understanding the meaning of Greek, and get a great part of his work done by assistants. This satire annoyed Pope more than any other attack, and he took a good deal of trouble to clear himself of the charges brought against him.

Fenton was delighted with the paper, which, he tells Broome, was evidently written by one who had studied and understood the poet. Fenton had not then seen the "Miscellanies," but was very much surprised to hear that Broome had been traduced by a person from whom he could little expect such ungenerous treatment. If Broome does not intend to answer the challenge publicly, the sullen silence of Ajax will be the most manly revenge. Broome had been deeply hurt by Pope's ingratitude, though he was too weak or too timid to take up the cudgels in his own defence, whether privately or publicly. But he complained bitterly to Fenton. Pope, he says, has now raised a spirit against him, which he will not easily conjure down. "He now keeps his Muse as wizards are said to keep tame devils, only to send them abroad to plague their neighbours. I often resemble him to a hedgehog; he wraps himself up in his down, lies snug and warm, and sets his bristles out against all mankind. Sure he is fond of being hated. I wonder he is not thrashed, but his littleness is his protection. . . ."

Broome declared that he would keep silence then, but would leave behind him memorials that would

make posterity acquainted with the history of the false statements about the "Odyssey," and concludes: "With respect to Mr. Pope, I have found him what you always affirmed him to be—a most insincere person."

CHAPTER XXXIV

1728

"The Dunciad"

ON May 18, 1728, appeared the first edition of "The Dunciad," but without the author's name or the inscription to Swift. Pope was always willing to wound, and seldom afraid to strike, but he shrank from the natural consequences of his own violence. As a measure of protection, it was stated on the title-page that the book was printed in Dublin and reprinted in London, while the publisher bore the unknown name of A. Dodd. There was a frontispiece representing an owl sitting on a pile of books, which consisted of "Dennis's Works," "Cibber's Plays," "Shakespeare Restored," and Blackmore's "Prince Arthur." The Prefatory Address from the Publisher to the Reader is a curious composition, and deserves some examination, since it was certainly written by Pope.

The publisher observes that when any scandal is vented against a man of the highest distinction and character, the public afford it a quiet, and even favourable, reception, whereas if a known scoundrel is touched upon a whole legion is up in arms. For the last two months the town had been per-

secuted with pamphlets, letters, and essays against the writings and character of Mr. Pope, yet not one of those who had received pleasure from his works—by a modest computation about a hundred thousand—had stood up to say a word in his defence. The only exception was the author of the following poem. The publisher professes to be in ignorance of his identity, but observes that he had evidently lived in peculiar intimacy with Mr. Pope, whose style he had to some extent imitated. The reader was evidently intended to draw the inference that Swift was the author. It is further stated that this work was the labour of full six years of the author's life, and that he had retired himself from all the avocations and pleasures of the world to attend diligently to its correction and perfection. The time and date of the action were evidently laid in the preceding reign, when the office of City Poet expired upon the death of Elkanah Settle,[1] and the author had chosen the year of Sir George Thorold's mayoralty—1720—but the writers satirised had been clapped in as they rose, and changed from day to day, so that there might be some obscurity in the chronology.

From an account afterwards published by Savage, as the mouthpiece of Pope, it would appear that

[1] Elkanah Settle (1648-1724) was appointed City Poet in 1691. He was known as a writer of heavy, bombastic dramas, of which the most successful was *Cambyses, King of Persia.* Dryden, alarmed at his popularity, satirised him in the second part of "Absalom and Achitophel." In his later years Settle fell upon evil times. He was reduced to writing burlesques for Bartholomew Fair, and is said to have played the part of a dragon in one of his own "drolls." He died in the Charterhouse.

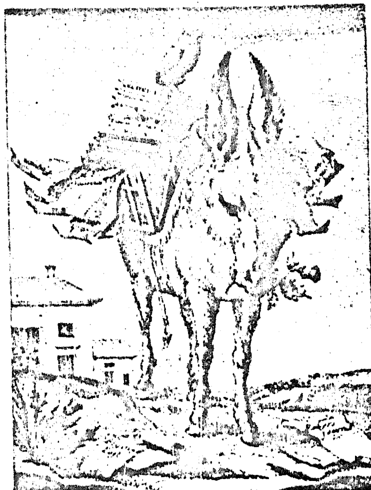
THE

DUNCIAD,

VARIORVM.

WITH THE

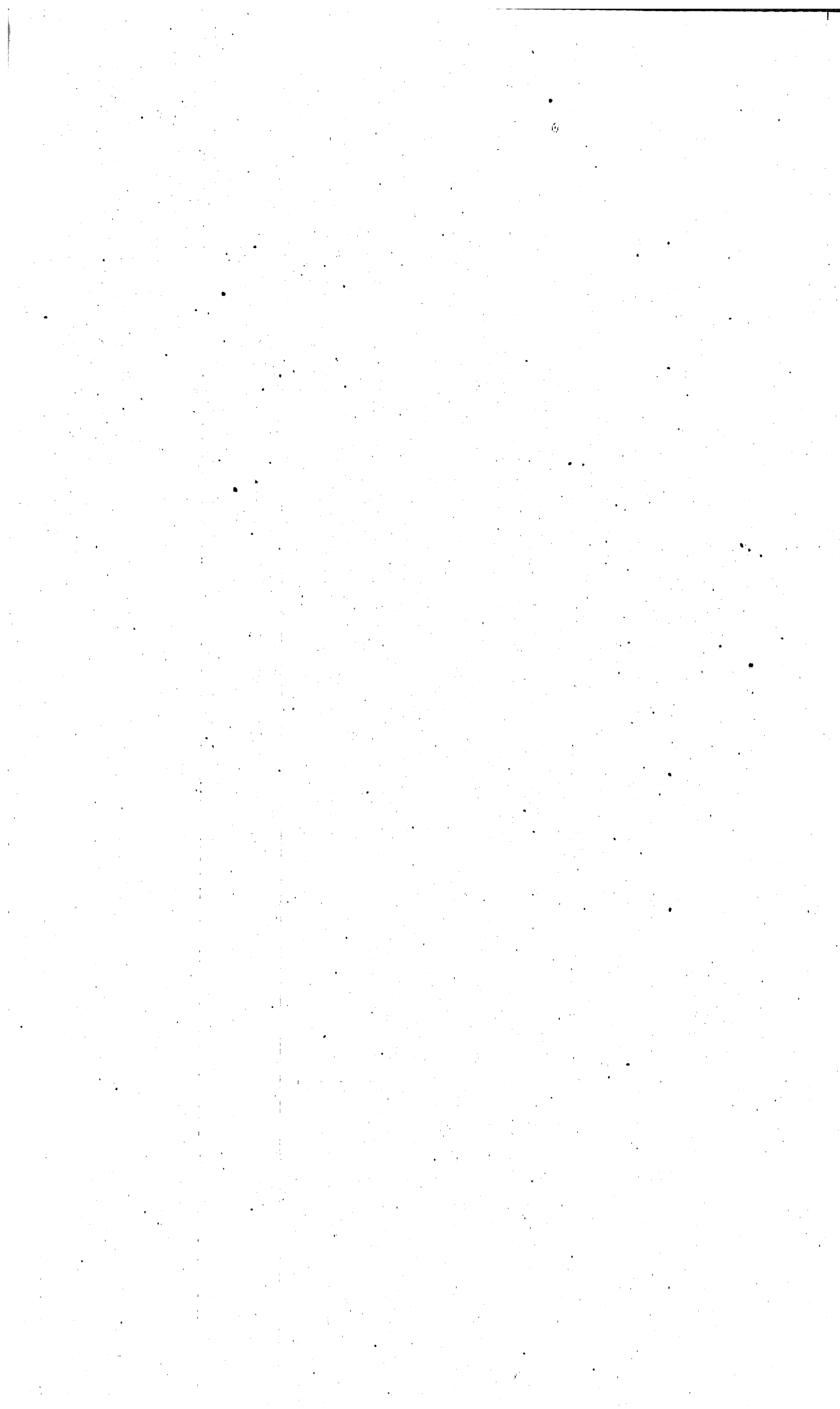
PROLEGOMENA of *SCRIBLERUS*.



LONDON.

Printed for A. DOD. 1729.

THE DUNCIAD.
Facsimile of title-page of an early edition.



the hack writers who took to themselves the initials, gave Mr. Pope the thought that he had now some opportunity of "doing good" by detecting and dragging into light these common enemies of mankind, since to invalidate this universal slander it sufficed to show what contemptible men were the authors of it. "He was not without hopes that, by manifesting the dulness of those who had only malice to recommend them, either the booksellers would not find their account in employing them, or the men themselves, when discovered, want courage to proceed in so unlawful an occupation. This it was that gave birth to 'The Dunciad,' and he thought it a happiness that, by the late flood of slander on himself, he had acquired such a peculiar right over their names as was necessary to this design. . . . It is certainly a true observation, that no people are so impatient of censure as those who are the greatest slanderers; which was wonderfully exemplified on this occasion. On the day the book was first vended a crowd of authors besieged the shop; entreaties, advices, threats of law and battery, nay, cries of 'Treason,' were all employed to hinder the coming out of 'The Dunciad'; on the other side, the booksellers and hawkers made as great efforts to procure it: what could a few poor authors do against so great a majority as the public?" [1]

"The Dunciad" was obviously founded on Dryden's satire "Mac Flecknoe," which deals with

[1] This garbled and exaggerated account formed the Introduction to "A Collection of pieces in Prose and Verse which have been published on the Occasion of 'The Dunciad'" (1732).

the appointment of Shadwell [1] to succeed Flecknoe [2] as monarch of the kingdom of Dulness. In 1713 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu had begun a poem about Dulness, of which a fragment is printed in her poetical works. She and Pope, when on terms of intimacy, may have discussed together the project of a sustained satire on this promising subject.

The original edition of "The Dunciad" was only in three books. The first book opens (after the exordium) with a description of the Temple of the Goddess of Dulness, a yawning ruin near Rag Fair.

> Here she beholds the chaos dark and deep
> Where nameless somethings in their causes sleep:
> Till genial Jacob or a warm third day
> Calls forth each mass, a poem, or a play:
> How hints, like spawn, scarce quick in embryo lie;
> How new-born nonsense first is taught to cry;
> Maggots half-formed in rhyme exactly meet,
> And learn to crawl upon poetic feet.

It was on the evening of Lord Mayor's Day, when Thorold had triumphed both on land and wave.

> Now night descending, the proud scene was o'er,
> But lived in Settle's numbers one day more.[3]

[1] Thomas Shadwell, the dramatist (1642–92). He succeeded his old enemy, Dryden, as Poet Laureate at the time of the Revolution.

[2] Richard Flecknoe, a poet and traveller. His name would long since have been forgotten were it not for Dryden's satire.

[3] Tennyson spoke of satire in general: "It's quite dreadful to think of how satire will endure, no matter how unfair, if well written. Look at Pope—

> Now night descending, the proud scene was o'er,
> But lived in Settle's numbers one day more.

The perfection of that brings the tears into one's eyes—and it pillories Settle for ever." (Quoted from William Allingham's "Diaries.")

Now mayors and shrieves in pleasing slumber lay,
And eat in dreams the custard of the day;
But pensive poets painful vigils keep,
Sleepless themselves to give their readers sleep.

The solemn feast recalls many fond memories to the goddess's mind, her glories in the past, and the successes of her distinguished sons, Eusden, Blackmore, Philips, Dennis, and their fellows. Looking about for a worthy successor to Settle, her glance fell upon Tibbald (Theobald).

She eyed the bard where supperless he sate
And pined, unconscious of his rising fate;
Studious he sate, with all his books around,
Sinking from thought to thought, a vast profound;
Plunged for his sense, but found no bottom there:
Then writ and floundered on, in mere despair.

A description of Tibbald's Gothic library follows, with its folios and black-letter editions—

The classics of an age that heard of none.

The hero addresses a solemn invocation to the goddess, whose champion he constitutes himself, and implores her to stretch out her peaceful wand over Britain, and "secure us kindly in our native night." He describes in eloquent terms his own services in her good old cause:

Here, studious, I unlucky moderns save,
Nor sleeps one error in its father's grave;
Old puns restore, lost blunders nicely seek,
And crucify poor Shakespeare once a week.
For thee I dim these eyes and stuff this head
With all such reading as was never read;
For thee supplying, in the worst of days,
Notes to dull books and prologues to dull plays;

For thee explain a thing till all men doubt it,
And write about it, goddess, and about it.

Theobald fears that the end of the empire of Dulness is approaching, owing to the death of Settle. He resolves, like Curtius, to plunge for the public weal, and devote himself henceforth to the service of the good cause. He builds an altar, and is about to offer up his books as a sacrifice, when the goddess appears and extinguishes the flames with a sheet of "Thulè."[1] She bids Theobald attend her to the sacred dome, and here shows her chosen all her favourite works, and the methods by which her followers attain her ends:

How, with less reading than makes felons 'scape,
Less human genius than God gives an ape,
Small thanks to France, and none to Rome or Greece,
A past, vamped, future, old, revived, new piece.
'Twixt Plautus, Fletcher, Congreve and Corneille
Can make a Cibber, Johnson, or Ozell.[2]

The goddess here anoints Theobald as successor to Settle, and as the ruler who is to lead her sons to lands that flow with clenches[3] and with puns:

"Till each famed theatre my empire own,
Till Albion, as Hibernia, bless my throne.
I see! I see!" Then rapt, she spoke no more.
"God save King Tibbald!" Grub Street alleys roar.

The king having been duly proclaimed, the

[1] An unfinished poem of Ambrose Philips.
[2] John Ozell. He was an accountant by profession, and became Auditor-General to the City of London. He translated Boileau's "Lutrin" and Perrault's "Characters." He is the subject of some satirical lines by Pope, entitled "The Translator."
[3] The word "clench," or, as it was more often spelt, "clinch," seems to have meant much the same as a pun.

ceremony is graced by public games and competitions, instituted by the goddess in person.[1] Hither flock poets and patrons, critics, party-writers, and booksellers.

> A motley mixture! in long wigs, in bags,
> In silks, in crapes, in garters, and in rags;
> From drawing-rooms, from colleges, and from garrets,
> On horse, on foot, in hacks and gilded chariots.

The games open with a race for booksellers, and the goddess puts up a "poet's form" as the prize, no meagre, muse-rid mop—

> But such a bulk as no twelve bards could raise,
> Twelve starving bards of these degenerate days.
> All as a partridge plump, full-fed and fair,
> She formed this image of well-bodied air,
> With pert, flat eyes she windowed well its head,
> A brain of feathers and a heart of lead,
> And empty words she gave, and sounding strain;
> But senseless, lifeless! Idol void and vain!
> Never was dasht out, at one lucky hit,
> A fool, so just a copy of a wit:
> So like, that critics said, and courtiers swore,
> A wit it was, and called the phantom Moore![2]

[1] Founded on the games in the "Iliad," where Thetis herself proposed the prizes in honour of Achilles.

[2] James Moore-Smythe (1702–34). He took the name of Smythe on inheriting the estate of an uncle. He was an intimate friend and correspondent of the Blount sisters. Pope's quarrel with him arose out of an alleged act of plagiarism. Moore, a fop who desired to be regarded as a wit, wrote a comedy called *The Rival Modes*, which was produced in 1727. He asked permission, it is said, to use six lines of Pope's from some verses addressed to Martha Blount on her birthday, which appeared in the "Miscellanies." These lines, which were afterwards incorporated in the Second "Moral Essay," ran as follows:

> 'Tis thus that vanity coquettes rewards,
> A youth of frolics, an old age of cards;

Lintot and Curll compete for the prize, which Curll wins, but when he stretches out his hand to grasp the phantom, it melts from his sight. Curll tries to seize its papers, but these, as plagiarisms, are whisked back to their rightful owners, Gay, Young, and Swift. Even the embroidered suit is snatched away by an unpaid tailor, and the bookseller is left with—

> No rag, no scrap, of all the beau or wit
> That once so fluttered, and that once so writ.

Next comes a tickling-match, carried out by means of flattering dedications, and a rich patron is the prize. This is followed by a competition for noise in general and braying in particular, with a drum and catcalls for the prizes.

> Now thousand tongues are heard in one loud din,
> The monkey-mimicks rush discordant in;
> 'Twas chatt'ring, grinning, mouthing, jabb'ring all,
> And R[alph] [1] and railing, Brangling, and B[reval], [2]

> Fair to no purpose, artful to no end,
> Young without lovers, old without a friend.
> A fool their aim, their prize some worn-out sot,
> Alive ridiculous, and dead forgot.

Pope seems at first to have consented that the lines should be used, but he afterwards changed his mind. Moore, however, introduce dthem, together with some lines from the "Essay on Criticism," into his comedy, which they partially redeemed from failure. Thereafter Pope seldom lost an opportunity for a slash at Moore-Smythe.

[1] James Ralph (*c.* 1705-62). A miscellaneous writer born in Pennsylvania, who accompanied Franklin to England in 1724. He was very successful as a party-hack, and eventually obtained a pension of £600 a year.

[2] John Durant Breval (*c.* 1680-1738). Another miscellaneous writer, who had served in Flanders as a volunteer. He usually wrote under the pseudonym of Joseph Gay. It may be noted that

> D[ennis] and dissonance; and captious art,
> And snip-snap short, and interruption smart.

In this sport all alike are held winners, since their merits and din are equal, but the brayers' prize is won by Blackmore.

> All hail him victor in both gifts of song,
> Who sings so loudly, and who sings so long.

The competitors then descend by Bridewell to Fleet Ditch, where the party-writers are bidden to strip and leap in, and prove who best can dash through thick and thin—

> And who the most in love of dirt excel,
> Or dark dexterity of groping well:
> Who flings most mud, and wide pollutes around
> The stream, be his the [London] Journals, bound.

A pig of lead is offered to him who dives the best, and "a peck of coals a-piece shall glad the rest." Dennis, Eusden,[1] Aaron Hill,[2] Welsted,[3] and lesser wights compete. The prize is gained by

the names of the victims are not always the same, but vary in different editions of "The Dunciad."

[1] Laurence Eusden (1688–1730), who had been appointed Poet Laureate by the Duke of Newcastle in 1718.

[2] Aaron Hill (1685–1750), dramatist, journalist, inventor, and traveller. He had already attacked Pope in a preface to his poem, "The Northern Star," having heard that Pope had disparaged that composition. He was afterwards reconciled to the poet, who treated him leniently in "The Bathos," and the two corresponded amicably for several years.

[3] Leonard Welsted (1688-1747). He was one of the many minor poets who held a small place under Government. He had satirised Pope and Gay in his poem, "The Triumvirate; or, a Letter from Palemon to Celia at Bath," published as far back as 1717.

Welsted, though Eusden, who has disappeared in the mud, suddenly rises up and relates how the Mud Nymphs had sucked him down, and shown him a branch of Styx, on whose banks doze departed bards. There he had been invested with cassock and vest by Luke Milbourne,[1] who assured him that "dulness is sacred in a sound divine."

The final competition is for critics, who are set to prove which author's works are the most conducive to slumber, "Hoadley's[2] periods or Blackmore's numbers." If there were any man who could listen to these works and yet defy slumber, he should be granted powers to sit—

> Judge of all present, past, or future wit,
> To cavil, censure, dictate, right or wrong,
> Full and eternal privilege of tongue.

Three Cambridge Sophs and three pert Templars enter for the match. The books are brought in, the vulgar form a ring; the clerks mount the rostrum—

> And in one lazy tone
> Through the long, heavy, painful page drawl on;
> Soft creeping, words on words, the sense compose;
> At ev'ry line they stretch, they yawn, they dose.

[1] The Rev. Luke Milbourne (1649-1720). He was made Rector of St. Ethelburga's Within, Bishopsgate, in 1704, and was a staunch supporter of Dr. Sacheverell. He criticised Dryden's translation of "Virgil," and attempted one himself. This would be sufficient to render him obnoxious to Pope.

[2] Printed "H——." In the MS. this is filled in with the name of Hoadley, successively Bishop of Hereford, Salisbury, and Winchester. He had attacked Atterbury in *The London Journal.* Pope afterwards pretended that he had meant Henley.

> As to soft gales top-heavy pines bow low
> Their heads, and lift them as they cease to blow;
> Thus oft they rear, and oft the head decline,
> As breathe or pause, by fits, the airs divine;
> And now to this side, now to that they nod,
> As prose or verse infuse the drowsy god.

At length readers and audiences alike are overcome by sleep, "and all was hushed as Folly's self lay dead."

In Book III. the goddess transports the new king to her temple, and there allows him to sleep with his head on her lap. In his dreams he is carried on easy Fancy's wing to the Elysian shades, where he is met by the ghost of Settle, who takes him to the Mount of Vision, whence he may view the triumphs of the Empire of Dulness in the past, the present, and the future. The great father thus addresses the greater son:

> How little, see! that portion of the ball
> Where, faint at best, the beams of science fall!
> Against her throne, from hyperborean skies,
> In dulness strong, th' avenging Vandals rise.
> Lo, where Mæotis sleeps, and hardly flows
> The freezing Tanais through a waste of snows,
> The North by myriads pours her mighty sons—
> Great nurse of Goths, of Alans, and of Huns:
> See Alaric's stern port, the martial frame
> Of Genseric, and Attila's dread name!
> See! the bold Ostrogoths on Latium fall;
> See! the fierce Visigoths on Spain and Gaul.
> See! where the morning gilds the palmy shore
> (The soil that arts and infant letters bore),
> His conq'ring tribes th' Arabian prophet draw
> And saving Ignorance enthrones by laws.
> See Christians, Jews, one heavy Sabbath keep,
> And all the Western World believe and sleep.

Then, distinguishing Great Britain, Settle shows by what persons the island shall be brought under the imperial sway of Dulness. Foremost among these are Theophilus Cibber,[1] Giles Jacob,[2] Dennis, Gildon, Hearne,[3] Orator Henley,[4] Ralph, and Welsted.

> Lo, thousand thousand, every nameless name,
> All crowd, who foremost shall be damned to fame;
> How proud! how pale! how earnest all appear!
> How rhymes eternal gingle in their ear!

The scene shifts, and a vast number of miracles and prodigies appear—the wonders of the new reign which is now beginning. Settle prophesies that the nation shall be overrun with farces, operas, and shows, the Throne of Dulness shall be set up even at Court, and her sons shall preside in

[1] The ne'er-do-weel son of Colley Cibber. Theophilus was an actor, and also wrote plays.

[2] Giles Jacob (1686–1744). He is described by Pope as the "blunderbuss of law." Jacob was a prolific writer and compiler. He wrote "The Poetical Register," in which he made slighting mention of Gay, and compiled a "New Law Dictionary." He tried to retaliate on Pope in a letter to John Dennis, and in a catch-penny publication entitled *The Mirror*, to which he invited Lady Mary Wortley to contribute.

[3] Thomas Hearne, the Oxford antiquary (1678–1735).

[4] John Henley (1692–1756). Though brought up among Dissenters, he took priest's orders, but found it impossible to conform to all the tenets of the Christian religion. He claims to have introduced "action" into the pulpit, and called himself "the Restorer of ancient eloquence." He set up his Oratory near Newport Market, and there preached on the Sundays on theological subjects and on Wednesdays on all other sciences. His hearers, some of whom were the butchers from the Market, paid a shilling each to hear him. Henley was also a party-writer, and believed to be in the pay of Walpole.

the seats of arts and sciences. Tibbald is shown how—

> A new world to nature's laws unknown,[1]
> Refulgent rises, with a heaven its own.
> Another Cynthia her new journey runs,
> And other planets circle other suns:
> The forests dance, the rivers upward rise,
> Whales sport in woods, and dolphins in the skies;
> And last, to give the whole creation grace,
> Lo! one vast egg produces human race.[2]
> Silent the monarch gazed, yet asked in thought
> What god or demon all these wonders wrought?
> To whom the Sire: "In yonder cloud, behold,
> Whose sarcenet skirts are hedged with flaring gold,
> A godlike youth. See! Jove's own bolts he flings,
> Rolls the loud thunder and the lightning wings!
> Angel of Dulness, sent to scatter round
> Her magic charms on all unclassic ground:
> Yon stars, yon suns, he rears at pleasure higher,
> Illumes their lights, and set their flames on fire.
> Immortal Rich![3] how calm he sits at ease—
> 'Mid snows of paper, and fierce hail of pease;
> And, proud his mistress' orders to perform,
> 'Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.'"[4]

Tibbald's reign is to be even greater and more triumphant than that of Settle. Like a rolling stone, his "giddy dulness still shall lumber on." Bavius is ordered to take the poppy from his own brow and place it on that of the hero,

[1] The world of farce and pantomime.

[2] In one of the pantomimes the harlequin was hatched out of a large egg.

[3] John Rich, the manager of the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and afterwards of Covent Garden. He was a harlequin of genius, who made pantomimes the rage.

[4] Borrowed from Addison's poem, "The Campaign."

the new Augustus who is born to bring Saturnian times :

> *Let there be darkness!* the dread power shall say.
> All shall be darkness, as it ne'er were day ;
> To their first Chaos wit's vain works shall fall,
> And universal Dulness cover all !
>
> No more the monarch could such raptures bear ;
> He waked, and all the vision mixed with air.[1]

[1] The quotations in this summary are all taken from the *first* edition of "The Dunciad," published in 1728.

END OF VOL. I

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